

Revisiting Landscape Art

Reinvented Nature Visions Inform 'New Landscapes Part II, at Santa Barbara City College's Atkinson Gallery



By **Josef Woodard**

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'2pm In the Park' - Soumya Natrabile / Credit: Josef Woodard

Our earthly home lays out her natural splendor beneath a cloud of impending peril. This much we know in the era of climate crisis awareness, which may increase an innate desire to retreat to and bask in nature's beauty and awe. Her current vulnerability can spur us into idealistic action — see the San Marcos Foothills and Carpinteria Bluffs for recent local examples.

Under such circumstances, art about nature can take on new meaning, forms, and agendas. Such as an underscoring theme of the exhibition *New Landscapes Part II*, the second of a two-part series now at SBCC's Atkinson Gallery. Not incidentally, the Atkinson is blessed with an inspiring, harbor-facing view from its outdoor patio perch. Nature calls with a sweet, sweeping song.

Eco-dread aside, the current selection of artworks curated by director John Connelly doesn't dwell on environmental anxieties, at least not explicitly. Some of the reference points and rebel rubs have to do with reframing old-school definitions of landscape art, centuries deep. In some cases, nods to nature coexist with stylistic twists influenced by abstract schools of expression, minimalist, funky, and otherwise.

Rougher stuff is also afoot, including Indian-born, Chicago-based artist Soumya Netrabile's gruffly charming painting "2 p.m. in the Park." A raw, color-infused view of a couple in an overgrown and unpopulated park is far from Renoir's impressionistic park-based canvassing, with a folk-art-like and post-neo-expressionist sense of play. The shambling looseness of the style and pictorial content contrast the notion of a park's controlled and ordered slice of nature.

New Landscapes Part II is on view at SBCC Atkinson Gallery (721 Cliff Dr., Humanities Bldg., Rm. 202) through February 28. Gallery hours are Mon.-Thu., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Fri., 11 a.m.-3 p.m.; and by appointment. See gallery.sbcc.edu.