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REVIEW

Under the Knife

[Armory Center for the Arts](#)
145 N. Raymond Ave, Pasadena
(626) 792-5101 www.armoryarts.org

Under the Knife

Under the Knife at the Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena

Typical of the Armory Center's high curatorial standards, Under the Knife took a broad theme and made it memorable through impeccable selection. Cutting -- with scissors, blades, or lasers -- was the common denominator, but each of the twelve artists maintains a distinct aesthetic, and there was a wonderful visual balance in the galleries between highly sculptural pieces and work that hung relatively (but not completely) flat upon the wall, and between hard-edged and feathery-edged stuff. Curator Sinéad Finnerty-Pyne clearly has a keen eye for both the beautiful and the well crafted.

Two artists were given entire rooms. In See-Through Super Sag Chris Natrop draped a dimmed room with very large hand-cut paper and hand-dyed PETG cutouts; set up three video projections, which seemed to reiterate the dripping, slipping effect of the translucent cutouts; and suspended small speakers amidst the plastic stalactites to emit spacey electronic music. Serendipitously, the music was also appropriate to the other installation nearby, Charlotte McGowan-Griffin's Illuminated Forest. The most poetically mesmerizing piece in the show, the installation, placed at the end of a former vault, consisted of many lit rondelles graced with delicate botanical cutouts and vaguely Pop-Arty designs. The rondelles consisted of the ends of tubes stacked atop one another, with colored lights projected from the other end. Some of them changed like mood rings, sometimes dominated by a blue/green, at other times a kind of mauve. To be sure, Illuminated Forest was very design-driven, but it proved mesmerizing, and I wished I could simply sit there and bathe in all that eco-energy.



Charlotte McGowan-Griffin, Illuminated Forest, 2008, modular light installation of layered cut paper, tubing, light source, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist.

Also worth mentioning were works by Francesca Gabbiani and Lana Shuttleworth, especially the latter artist's two complementary tableaux, Underground and Under Water, both made from cut polyvinyl chloride on panel.

by Scarlet Cheng

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