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Art review: 'Airplane Show' soars at b. sakata garo

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"Heir Planes" by Tony May and Chris Daubert is part of the show at b. sakata garo.

"The Airplane Show" at b. sakata garo is a sterling example of that old standby – the theme show. Its heyday was in the 1960s and '70s at the Artist's Contemporary Gallery. Old-timers will remember with pleasure lively shows such as "The Ladder Show" and "The Crow Show," which

featured imaginative works by many of Sacramento's top artists. "The Airplane Show" rivals them for ingenuity and quality.

From Matt Bult's surreal flying machine made of bed springs to Peter Stegall's meticulously crafted "Cactus Air," a biplane made of cardboard, wood and paint, the show is a winner. The exhibition opens with a work that seems to materialize out of thin air. Gyongy Laky spells the word "air" out with silver pins that form a nearly invisible message that is both elegant and ethereal.

Nearby, at the center of the show, is John Buck's "Eye in the Sky," a whimsical, beautifully crafted flying machine that lifts its wings and spins its propeller with the turn of a crank. Reminiscent of works by H.C. Westermann, one of the most influential yet underrated artists of the 20th century, Buck's work is a fine piece of madly crafted absurdity.

There are two juicy two-dimensional works in the show – Irving Marcus' large painting of a plane in a red sky flying over a cityscape and Jack Ogden's antic collage "Kitty Hawk #02 – but most of the works in the show are sculptures.

They range from Tom Marioni's minimalist conceptual piece, an undulating construction of two sheets of heavy paper hung from the ceiling, to Bob Sacramento's (a.k.a. Barry and Barbara Sakata) "Crash," a charming paper plane that has "crashed" into an existing column in the gallery.

Works range in scale from Frank LaPena's small balsa wood plane to Chris Daubert and Tony May's large and complex "Heir Planes." Made of wood and wood planes Daubert has inherited, hence the punning title, it's a gorgeous display of highly polished tools hung in an aerodynamic pattern from a doorlike frame. It contrasts nicely with LaPena's simply carved plane in a bird shape that is like a spiritual American Indian fetish.

Both are strong and evocative works as is Gale Wagner's "Whitecloud," an assemblage made of an elaborately crafted airplane poised on top of a broom handle. The oddly beautiful piece bears a message – "employ the handicapped" – on the broom, which is of a kind distributed by a group that helps handicapped people.

Also moving is Isaac and Mike Henderson's childlike paper planes, expressively painted and hanging from the ceiling. More elaborate is Richard Feese's menacing "B-2 Stealth Stingray," a metallic, birdlike plane made of recycled scraps.

'couchbleachers' at Verge

"couchbleachers" at Verge Center for the Arts is an artless art piece made of sofas that serves as a backdrop and lounging platform on which to witness a series of performances and events (<http://vergeart.com/blog/2015/01/12/couchbleachers-programming>) through March 22.

Free events include weekly Friday Lunch Hour Movies at noon; children's story time on Feb. 18 and March 8; a Second Saturday Kiss In from 6 to 9 p.m. Feb. 14; the New Group Mess: A Night of Discussion and Oral Histories About the Sacramento Art Scene at 6:30 p.m. Feb. 18, and a Second Saturday Wild Card at 6 p.m. March 14.

For a full schedule of events go to vergeart.com (<http://vergeart.com/>). Verge Center for the Arts, 625 S St., Sacramento. Gallery is open 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Wednesday-Saturday and noon-5 p.m. Sunday. (916) 448-2985.

THE AIRPLANE SHOW

Where: b sakata garo, 923 20th St., Sacramento

When: Through Jan. 31. Noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday

Cost: Free

Information: (916) 447-4276. www.bsakatagaro.com (<http://www.bsakatagaro.com/>)

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