

'Plant Portraits' On Display at Oakland Museum

By Michael Chung
Staff Writer

"Plant Portraits: The California Legacy of A. R. Valentien," is on display at the Oakland Museum of California.

The showcase, composed of 80 exquisite watercolor paintings of California wildflowers drawn by Albert R. Valentien, will be on display until Dec. 4.

According to the museum's Web site, Valentien and his wife moved to California in 1908 after falling in love with the state during a visit five years earlier. In 1908, San Diego philanthropist Ellen Browning Scripps commissioned Valentien to paint a series of California wildflowers.

Over the next 10 years, the painter created more than 1,000 detailed paintings, depicting 1,500 species of wildflowers, despite his lack of botanical training.

Tom Steller, chief curator of the museum's natural sciences department, said Valentien's paintings are unique because he painted the wildflowers with great detail without sketching the wildflowers first with a pencil.

"Valentien would say, 'I just painted what I saw,' and he really saw," Steller said.

Steller said the paintings are also unique because the wildflowers are portrayed in "different stages."

"In some paintings, the flowers have bloomed completely," Steller said. "In others, they've wilted."

Bright and Shiny:
(right) This painting by A.R. Valentien is titled "California Poppy" and was painted early in the 20th century.

Flower Power:
(for right) The painting "Humboldt's Lily" is a watercolor/gouache painting also by A.R. Valentien.

Photos/ Courtesy



Valentien had assumed that his paintings would be published at their completion, but was disappointed when Scripps decided that publication would be too costly.

"Plant Portraits" was organized by the San Diego Natural History Museum, which inherited Valentien's paintings after Scripps' death.

Valentien, born in 1862, was raised and educated in Cincinnati. He studied painting at the University of Cincinnati School of Design.

In 1881, Valentien was hired at the Rookwood Pottery in Cincinnati, where he spent 24 years as chief decorator and artistic director.

Valentien's distinctive glazes and designs reflected his interest in the arts and crafts movement, a decorative style that extolled the

virtues and forms of nature.

After Valentien and Anna Marie Bookprinter, a sculptor and painter, married in 1887, they traveled to Europe for further training and to prepare the Rookwood Pottery exhibit for the 1900 Paris Exposition.

While Valentien recuperated in Germany from an illness during the trip, he painted the flowers of the region, which proved to be a turning point in his career.

For more information, call 238-2000 or visit www.museumca.org.

The museum is open Wednesday through Sunday. Admission is \$8 for the general public, \$5 for seniors and students with identification, and free for members and children under 5 years of age.

'Children of Eden' Concludes Summer Theatre Series

By Michael Chung
Staff Writer

"Children of Eden," the final production in Cal State East Bay's Highland Summer Theatre series, premiered Friday.

The final performances are scheduled for tomorrow and Saturday at 8 p.m. and Sunday at 2 p.m. All performances will take place in the Studio Theatre on the CSUEB campus.

"Opening night went considerably well," said Dawn Monique Williams, director of the musical. "The audience seemed to really enjoy the show, and the cast and I are extremely proud of the work we have put into it."

The musical, based on a book by John Caird and music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, starred CSUEB students David Zelenka as Adam and Noah, Sean Cooper as Cain and Japheth, Monica Santiago as Yonah, and Sean Roberts as Snake, Abel and Ham. Community members Jerry Rowe starred as The Father and Jessica Kiely as Eve.

"The actors and dancers have worked extremely hard, putting in extra hours to learn music and dance routines," Williams said. "I have been in love with this musical for several years, so the process of bringing it to fruition was very exciting."

The musical was directed by Williams, a CSUEB alumna who has

directed several CSUEB productions, such as "Medea," "Trojan Women," "Creon" and "Christmas Carol." The vocal director and conductor was April McNeely-Zissman, who recently completed work for her master's degree in the CSUEB music department.

"Children of Eden" is based on the book of Genesis and examines the age-old conflict between parents and children. In the musical, Adam, Eve, Noah and The Father deal with their headstrong children. It delivers a bittersweet message that "the hardest part of love is letting go."

"While it would be foolish of me to say the show is not at all 'religious,' the show's themes really transcend the confines of any religion," Williams said. "The show is about family, faith, growth, change and hope. I was drawn to the show for the comment it makes on the will of the human spirit and the desire to challenge our institutions."

The musical features songs of various genres, including pop, folk, rock, reggae and gospel.

Despite a less than stellar turnout, the show was well received by the audience, said Tom Hird, chair of the CSUEB theatre and dance department.

"From the little kids playing the animals of Eden and the ark up to the adults that have joined us from the community, it worked great,"

Hird said. "The orchestra is making especially wonderful music for us, too. Young and old, everyone will appreciate this show."

According to the Wikipedia Web site, the original version of "Children of Eden" opened at London's West End theatre on Jan. 8, 1991. The show closed on Apr. 6, 1991, after the Persian Gulf War halted tourism, which ended hope of moving the musical to Broadway.

Throughout the 1990s, the musical still managed to become popular through many amateur and professional productions.

In 1997, a reworked and edited version of the musical was performed at the Paper Mill Playhouse in Millburn, N.J.

One of the cast recordings of this production was produced by Schwartz himself.

The reworked version of the musical is typically the version that is licensed for production in the United States.

Admission is \$14 for general admission, \$10 for seniors, children, faculty and staff, \$8 for CSUEB students and \$35 for a group of two adults and two children.

Tickets are available at the University Box Office Monday through Friday from noon to 4 p.m. and one hour before each performance.

For more information, call 885-3261.

Oakland Cinema Replays Big Screen Classics

By Otto A. Rodriguez
Staff Writer

There is a place in Oakland where moviegoers can revisit a simpler time where a night at the movies was an event.

The 2005 Free Old Oakland Outdoor Cinema resumes play at sunset Saturday on a closed off Ninth Street and Washington Avenue in the Old Oakland District.

Officials say the 10-foot screen is reminiscent of a drive-in.

"I like the atmosphere and the crowd is great," said John Delaney, an Outdoor Cinema regular. "I've come here the two years it's been going on, and it definitely puts a new perspective on films when you see them on the big screen."

The series continues its run Saturday with the 1959 classic, "Some Like it Hot," starring Mari-

lyn Monroe, Tony Curtis and Jack Lemmon. The film starts at sunset with limited seating available.

Filmgoers are encouraged to bring chairs and blankets.

A "Late Night Feature" will add to this year's festivities. It will feature two films by local filmmakers: "Confessions of a Burning Man" will follow "The Station Agent," and "Olive or Twist" will play after "Waiting for Guffman."

"West Side Story" kicked off the series on Tuesday. Rita Moreno, who starred in the film, was on hand to present and answer questions about the film.

Moreno won the 1962 Oscar for Best Supporting Actress for her portrayal of "Anita" in "West Side Story."

According to the Oakland Film Office, which sponsors the event, the Outdoor Cinema has become more

popular as the series continues. In 2004, the event averaged more than 300 people per screening. This year's first screening brought more than 400 to the cinema.

"I think it's growing in popularity because people like seeing these films on a big screen," said Janet Austin of the Oakland Film Office. "We're trying to bring people downtown to the restaurants and shops. It was a collaborative effort between the district and us. It just came together quite nicely."

The Outdoor Cinema will continue its run with newer "classics," "The Station Agent" on Sept. 17 and "Waiting for Guffman" on Oct. 15.

Free parking is available at 8th and Washington streets with Old Oakland just one block away from the 12th Street/City Center BART station.

For more information call 238-4734.

Meth Bill Could Set Limits on Pharmacy Purchases

Meth, from page one.

of the super-labs."

In response, Feinstein sponsored the Combat Meth Act that passed unanimously in the Senate Judiciary Committee on July 28. The bill would remove over-the-counter cold or sinus pills that contain pseudoephedrine from store shelves. Pseudoephedrine is a nasal decongestant that is one of the household ingredients used in "cooking" meth.

"It's manmade — everything you need is at the grocery store," said one meth user, who asked not to be identified. "Cold medicine, battery acid — you can buy it over the counter. That's why it's so cheap."

If Feinstein's bill passes, such pills would be sold only by pharmacies and would set monthly limits of 7.5 grams, approximately 250 pills, on an individual's purchase. It would

also contain restrictions for airport vendors to limit their sales to 360 milligrams per person in a 24-hour period.

The bill would require customers to show identification and sign a register, and would require retailers to send records of purchases to state databases, so that no one can exceed the purchase limit.

The bill would provide \$25 million to help law enforcement prosecute meth offenders, \$13 million to set up meth treatment and research, and \$5 million to help children who have been neglected by meth addicts or exposed to the toxic chemicals in meth labs. The bill also allows states to enact more rigid standards than are provided in the bill if they so choose.

Officials say that not only is meth easily created, it also has a very addictive quality. According to Narconon Southern California, meth increases arousal in the central nervous system by pumping up levels of two neurotransmitters, norepinephrine and dopamine. At low doses, meth boosts alertness and blocks hunger and fatigue. At higher doses, meth causes exhilaration and euphoria. At very high doses, the effects of meth can cause agitation, paranoia, and bizarre behavior.

According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy and Drug Enforcement Administration, this bill is needed because seizures of meth labs have doubled over the last five years. Between the Drug Enforcement Agency and state and local authorities, 474 meth labs were seized last year, including a number in the Bay Area.

"In general, we usually discover one to three small meth labs operating in the city each year," said Hayward Police Lieutenant Robert Weldon. "We arrest hundreds of people for being under the influence of meth every year as well."

The Alameda County Narcotics Task Force arrested three men on July 22 in connection with a meth ring that ran from San Jose to the East Bay. They arrested the men after an eight-week task force investigation headed by Oakland Police Officer Roger Lee. The investigation was spurred by information supplied by the State Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement.

The alleged ringleaders, David Mendoza, 34, of San Jose and Mike Spagnola, 26, of Richmond, were arrested in the Newark parking lot where police say they found 10 pounds of meth in Mendoza's trunk. Police also arrested Jose Sanchez, 35, of El Cerrito at his home.

All three men were charged with multiple counts of sales of methamphetamine, possession for sale and conspiracy. Mendoza was also charged with transportation of methamphetamine.

The task force received assistance to obtain warrants from

Oakland, San Jose and Richmond police, and the Alameda County Sheriff's Department. They served the search warrants at the men's homes but found no drugs.

Along with the arrests, they also seized 13 pounds of meth, valued at \$1.75 million. This was one of the largest amounts of meth seized by the task force. Police say that the meth was 95 percent pure.

Police say that the task force originally focused on Sanchez, but additional investigation and surveillance led them to the other two men. The task force claims to have observed Mendoza making several deliveries in San Jose, Oakland, Emeryville, Richmond, and Newark. It was then determined that Mendoza was "a major weight dealer," said Steve Angeja of the Alameda County Sheriff's Department.

"He would sell a pound of meth for \$7,000, and sold between three and five pounds a week," Angeja said of Mendoza.

Although labeled "the poor man's cocaine," officials say that methamphetamines are everywhere, from impoverished neighborhoods all the way up the socioeconomic ladder.

Fairfield City Councilman John English was convicted in early July of drug possession and possession of drug paraphernalia after a routine luggage search at the Sacramento International Airport led to the discovery of methamphetamine and two pipes in his baggage.

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Anxiety, emotional swings, and paranoia are the most common psychological effects due to chronic use of meth. Symptoms increase with long-term use, and can involve paranoid delusions and hallucinations. Violence and self-destructive behavior are common.

But one user said meth provides a "controllable high."

"It makes me more productive, move faster — everything is sped up," said the source, who asked not to be named. "I can do more, last longer and never really get tired, unless I'm coming down."

Methamphetamine labs not only create the drug distributed to millions of people in the United States, they also produce dangerous toxic waste. Many of the chemicals used in cooking meth are reactive, flammable, and explosive. For every pound of meth produced, experts say six pounds of toxic waste is generated.

This requires hazmat teams in hermetically-sealed suits and breathing apparatus to enter and thoroughly clean the lab area. The chemicals and fumes saturate walls, carpet, plaster, wood, and surrounding soil and water. They can cause cancer, brain damage, immune and respiratory problems. Surfaces, plumbing, and ventilation systems also need to be cleaned.

Each individual lab cleanup can cost more than \$25,000.

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