

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2014 | SERVING SAN FRANCISCO, SAN MATEO AND SANTA CLARA COUNTIES | SFEXAMINER.COM

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ART

Chandon evokes America's past

By Anita Katz
Special to The S.F. Examiner

Artist Melissa Chandon revisits landscapes of leisure from decades past in her autobiographical paintings, colorfully documenting a world of big cars, peaceful sailboating, and other experiences predating green thinking, GPS and stress as we know it. In her new exhibition, Chandon continues her exploration of classic highway and roadside imagery. "American Vacation" is her theme.

On view at Caldwell Snyder Gallery in San Francisco, the show consists of about two dozen paintings by Chandon, a self-described product of the 1950s who draws on childhood family road trips for artistic inspiration.

Both factual and imaginative, Chandon's brand of representationalism involves Americana, semi-abstractness and a heightened or fanciful palette. Her influences include David Hockney, Richard Diebenkorn and Wayne Thiebaud. Like Thiebaud's work, Chandon's vividly colored paintings, with their recognizable imagery, bring pop art to mind but are their own breed, characterized by a non-mass-produced and slightly nostalgic look and an emotionally inviting quality.

Set all over the map — the Arizona desert, Alaskan mountains, a Florida beachfront, Mount Tam — the works on view, most of which are square, measuring from 1 to 5 feet — rarely contain people.



COURTESY MELISSA CHANDON/CALDWELL SNYDER GALLERY

"Tee Pee Motel" is among Melissa Chandon's "American Vacation" paintings on view at Caldwell Snyder Gallery.

Yet a human presence, represented by vehicles, surfboards, lifeguard stations, and lodging, pervades everything.

Vintage cars figure big. In "Pink Convertible Caddy" (60-by-60 inches, oil on canvas), a Cadillac, pink and beyond, dominates the picture. As with much of Chandon's work, the painting prompts

IF YOU GO: Melissa Chandon: American Vacation

Where: Caldwell Snyder Gallery, 341 Sutter St., S.F. When: Daily, through Nov. 30 Admission: Free Contact: (415) 392-2299, www.caldwellsnyder.com

thoughts about the unseen vacationers involved. What are their stories?

In "Tee Pee Motel" (48-by-48 inches, oil on panel), five salmon-colored tent-like triangular structures illustrate Chandon's strong use of geometric shapes. In the foreground, in complementary blue, the curves of a swimming pool create their own pattern. A significant shadow — a Chandon trademark — in the water, cast by a white platform, suggests depth and substantiality.

In "Alaska Kayaks" (60-by-60 inches, oil on panel), a red camper with a multicolored row of kayaks on top appears to be driving toward the viewer, with snowy white peaks producing an imposing backdrop. The work demonstrates how Chandon uses the landscape genre to explore form and color and to attribute a hint of majesty to such recreation experiences.

Melissa Chandon lives and works in the Bay Area. Her works have been exhibited at the Center for Contemporary Art in Sacramento and the Morris Graves Museum, in Eureka, and are included in collections of the de Young Museum.

ON DISPLAY

San Francisco Altered Barbie Exhibit:

People contributing to the 12th annual creative reuse art show transform the iconic dolls into not-so-everyday art that reflects current culture. Poetry night in conjunction with the show is at 7 p.m. today, closing reception is at 6 p.m. Nov. 15, Wednesdays-Sundays, through Nov. 16, free. Shotwell 50 Studio: 50 Shotwell St., S.F., www.alteredbarbie.com

Works by Binh Danh and Kota Ezawa:

"This, then, is San Francisco" is Danh's latest series of daguerreotypes focusing on the cityscape, rendering scenic views, sites of civic engagement and familiar street scenes with exquisite detail. "The Aesthetics of Silence" includes



Ezawa's silver gelatin prints, light boxes and a new video installation focusing on protagonists of American modern art and European artists who helped lay the groundwork for abstract painting. Opens with a 5:30 p.m. reception today, runs through Dec. 20, free. Haines Gallery, 49 Geary St., Suite 540, S.F., (415) 397-8114, www.hainesgallery.com