

Through a New Lens

BY TAYLOR MICAELA DAVIS AND LESLIE DINABERG

Whether juxtaposing relationships between objects in curious new ways, transforming trash to treasure or opening our eyes to unexpected images of abstract art that we pass by every day, these three artists epitomize the notion of viewing the world through a new lens.

Dan Levin

ASSEMBLAGE ARTIST Dan Levin's "Objects of Curiosity" have intrigued local art aficionados since he arrived in Santa Barbara in 1986. With a wicked sense of humor, Levin integrates objects from the natural world with the detritus of popular culture, along with discarded items that are no longer useful for their original purpose, creating what he calls "singular objects that didn't exist before."

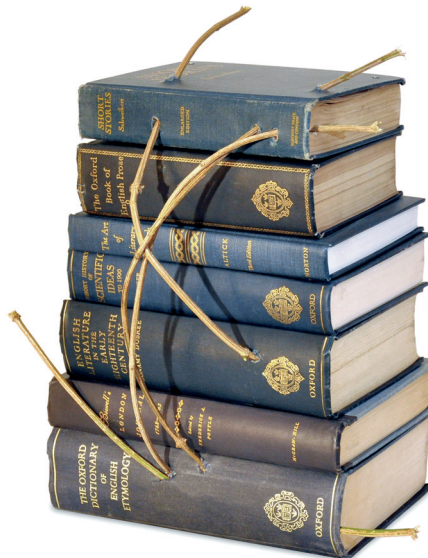
Levin tends toward working in series, ranging from "joysticks" impossible skateboards to politically charged toilet paper and just about anything else that tickles his fancy. "I like to give new life to things whose lives would otherwise be over," says the artist.

He's prolific, too, with what art critic Charles Donelan describes as "one of our city's most restless and surprising imaginations" on display in multiple venues this season, including a solo show, "Blurred Assembly Lines," at Bella Rosa Galleries (1103 State St., 805/966-1707, www.bellarosasb.com), Oct. 4–29; "BULL/Invitational" at Santa Barbara Tennis Club (2375 Foothill Rd., 805/682-4722, www.santabarbaratennisclub.com/secondfridays.html), Sept. 7–Oct. 6; and "Three's a Crowd: Minimal Expression in a Maximal World" at Art From Scrap Gallery (302 E. Cota St., 805/884-0459, www.artfromscrap.org/afsgallery.php), Oct. 5–Nov. 3.

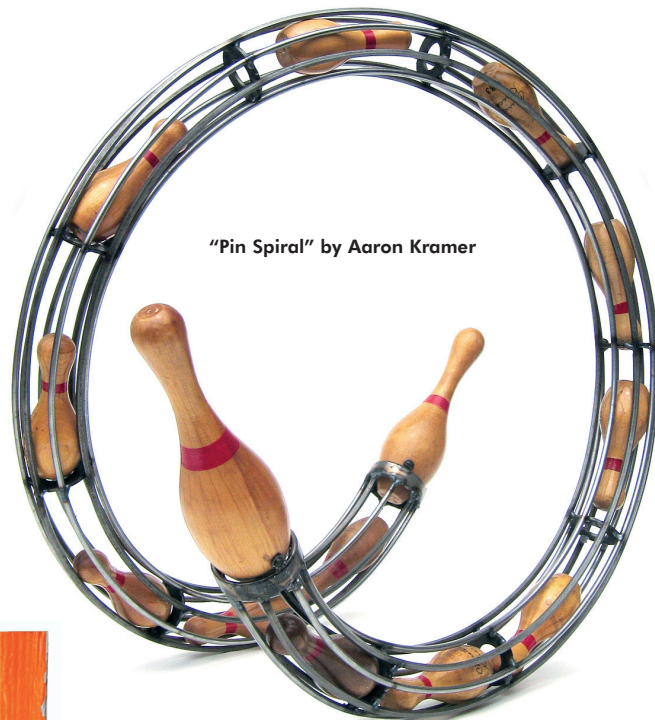
"I believe in happy accidents. I like to put unexpected things together and meander in new directions," says Levin. We'll happily meander along with him.



"Quinquennium" by Dan Levin



"File Under Anglo" by Dan Levin



"Pin Spiral" by Aaron Kramer

Aaron Kramer

WHERE WE SEE REJECTED rubbish in waste cans, Aaron Kramer envisions functional, affluent art pieces.

Kramer's found-object philosophy goes beyond making art from recycled goods. He wants his audience to experience his pieces in terms of design, craft and, lastly (after admiring his skill), realizing what the piece is made of.

"I want them to have that 'ah-ha' moment where they realize the material it was made from. It is at that moment that the 'found object' within has the most impact."

Not just any object will do. Each component of Kramer's work is meticulously considered: where it was found, how it got there and what it will be used for. Not only that, but these objects have to have character. Kramer looks for "a built-in equity" or "process" when rummaging through rubble, using pieces that have a special history behind their composition or destruction.

After selecting his decorative debris, Kramer creates beautiful one-of-a-kind pieces, from an ornately weaved lamp made of coffee stirrers to a headboard fashioned from worn broom handles. His collection of offal objects can be viewed at Plum Goods starting Sept. 6 (909 State St., 805/845-3900, www.plumgoods-store.com).

"Trash is the failure of imagination" chimes Kramer's artistic motto, and his art—hardly trash to our eyes—stirs that imagination in us all.