

Paradise Found at Oakland University's Art Exhibit

By Suzanne Chessler - 08/28/2019 12:00 PM

Oakland University's Art Gallery exhibit considers the concept of paradise through international artists' work.



Ever wonder what the idea of paradise ultimately could mean for you or someone else?

Dick Goody, director of the Oakland University Art Gallery, gives people a chance to view the concept from the imaginations represented visually by a group of international artists.

Goody, also an associate professor of art and curator of the art collection at the university, has curated the exhibit "Your Very Own Paradise" to be shown Sept. 7- Nov. 24 and has included participants with ties to Israel.

"The subjectivity surrounding paradise is explored via the depictions of motifs as progressive, optimistic, existential indicators: home, food, identity, métier, harmony, euphoria and so on," says Goody, who accessed pieces from other showings. "In an era of crisis and dissimulation, this exhibition presents a conduit to inspire the viewer to repose in a visual culture that is less pessimistic and more open to the abundance of a positive and inclusive world view."

Melanie Daniel, who lives and teaches in Grand Rapids after studying art in Israel, is showing her oil painting, "Goat Love in a Digital Age." It was planned as a humorous project featuring the refuge of a band of islanders who coexist with goats that balance on tree limbs. The youths are going through digital detox as they tend to the goats.

"The focus is on working for positive changes in our relationship to one another and the communities in which we live," says Daniel, the Padnos distinguished visiting artist at Grand Valley State University.

"My piece is kind of a wink and smile in the midst of catastrophe. It portrays a generation that defies contemporary cultural convention and yearns for a different path." This painting represents Daniel's trend of making crowded narrative paintings in psychedelic colors. Most of her scenes are set in otherwise desolate, sun-drenched utopias in the near future, when people try to reconnect with nature and rebuild their post-cataclysm world.

Daniel pursued her artistic possibilities in Israel, after meeting, in India, the Israeli man she married. The artist studied at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem, leaving behind studies involving very different careers with art then in the background.

"I'm presently exhibiting (until Sept. 8) a solo show at the Grand Rapids Art Museum called 'Only Four Degrees,'" Daniel says. "It deals with climate change and the effects of a four-degree increase on our planet."

Other artists in the Oakland University exhibit include Nick Archer (painter), Enrique Chagoya (painter and printmaker), Maira Kalman (illustrator, artist and designer), Amer Kobaslija (painter), Andrew Lenaghan (painter), Tayna Marcuse (photographer), Rebecca Morgan (painter, drawer and ceramist), Lamar Peterson (painter), Simon Roberts (photographer), Thomas Trosch (painter) and Marc Yankus (photographer).

"This exhibition brings people and art together in a place where they leave all their anxieties behind," Goody says. "They are free and safe to imagine a better world."