

Scenic Sightings

WITH HER SHOW "THE REASON FOR THE SEASONS," MULTIMEDIA ARTIST LENORE HUGHES DEALS WITH GREEK MYTHOLOGY AND VISIONS OF NATURE AND CULTURE IN THE PRITZLAFF GALLERY'S IDYLIC SETTING

By Josef Woodard,
News-Press Correspondent



Leonore Tolegian Hughes,
"The Reason for the Seasons"

When: Date and time

Gallery Hours: Daily, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Where: Pritzlaff Conservation Center
Gallery at the Santa Barbara Botanic
Garden, 1212 Mission Canyon Road.

Information: 682-4726,
www.sbbg.org

Strategically placed by the entrance to the Leonore Tolegian Hughes' current exhibition, "The Reason for the Seasons," there hangs her piece called "Enchanted Garden." It's a friendly mash-up of media — watercolor, oil pastel and collage, and the apt power word "GARDEN" serving as a point of reference, location and worship, in this case.

It is also an ideal introductory frontispiece to an exhibition in an enchanted setting, the Pritzlaff Conservation Center Gallery, in a still-young structure and research center situated a short, nature-kissed walk above the expanse of the Botanic Garden.

On a pre-spring morning — crisp, clear and rain-scrubbed — the sense of spring's awakening and a seasonal shifting was scenically visible from the remarkable vista view of the space. The ocean and the Channel Islands beckoned far below, one of the reasons that the Pritzlaff is quite possibly the Santa Barbara art space with the most stunning view (perhaps beating out, or at least tying, City College's Atkinson Gallery).

Ms. Hughes' show, which blends reverence for nature, seasons and the Greek Mythological backdrop of the tale of Demeter and Persephone, feels right at home here. As it turns out, in considering Ms. Hughes' art, collage is an operative term, as medium, practice and attitude.

The artist, who has taught at Westmont College and Santa Barbara City College and has shown her work in various cities, pursues her ideas in watercolor, paper weaving collage,

etching and a token, telling sculptural sentry in this show, going by the name "Muse." In this incarnation, the muse — that mythic creativity deity and source of both inspiration and frustration for artists of all types — is portrayed in metal and collage and placed between two idyllic picture windows in the Pritzlaff Gallery.

Leonore Tolegian Hughes' "The Reason For The Seasons" gallery wall

Exhibition design plays a role in the overall continuity and dramatic effect of the show, organized with thematic deliberateness. Four large watercolor images of a female face — presumably Demeter (goddess of agriculture and harvest) — represent

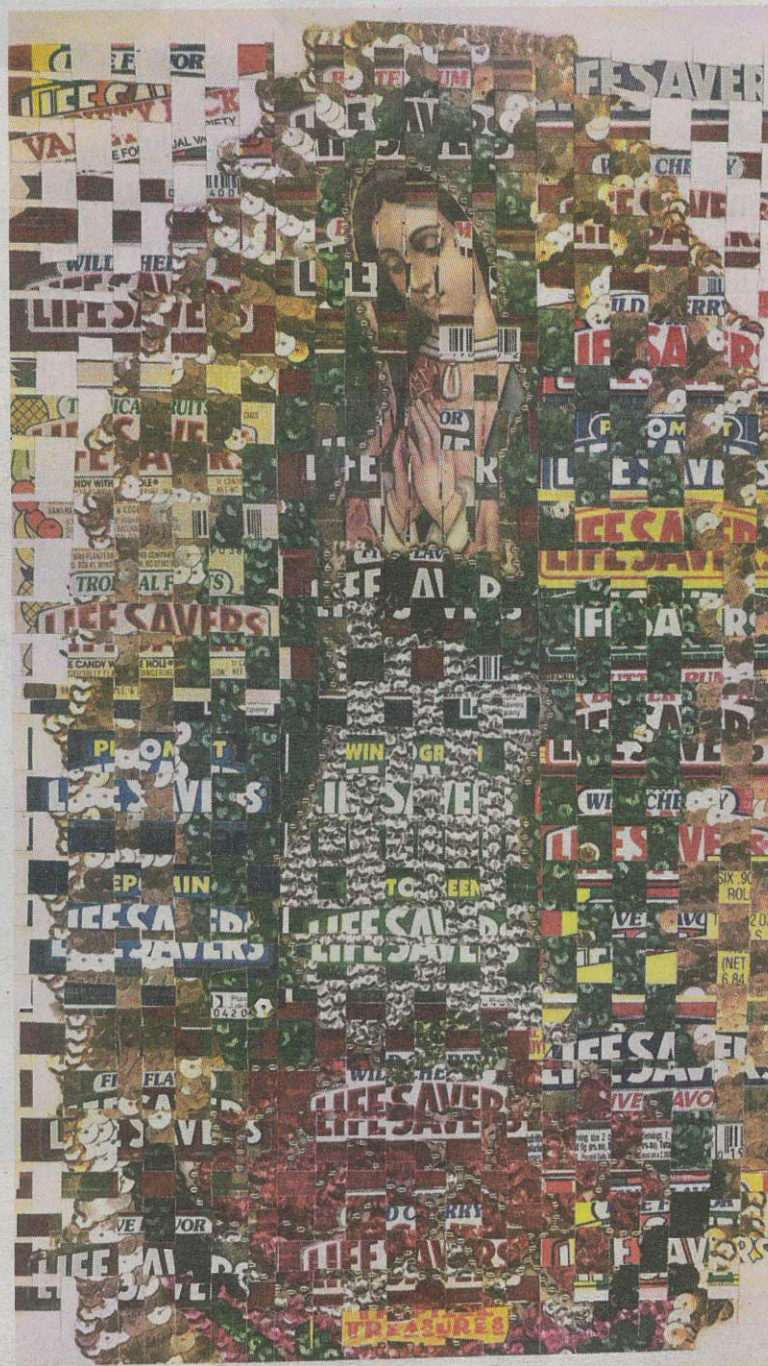
the four seasons and face off, two on each wall, framed by season-centric vegetation and stages of flora growth and dormancy. Variations on the seasonal theme are color-coded and mood-coded, from understated, pallid winter to sensually resplendent

summer.

Fringing these central four works are collage works, with visions of floral and natural life, with a decorative filigree.

HUGHES

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Life Saver by Leonore Tolegian Hughes



Muse by Leonore Tolegian Hughes

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HUGHES

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Craftily inter-stitched paper weaving pieces also blend classicist/religious art with scraps of cheeky, secular-to-a-fault pop cultural kitsch. Vintage Madonna iconography anchors works such as "Mother Love" and "Life Saver," which are literally interwoven with references to Marvel Comics and Life Savers candy wrappers, respectively. Sacred, meet the profane and the mundane.

Pushing into a different corner of religious tradition, and with a local-universal connection, Ms. Hughes presents her own unique vision of St. Agnes — the host saint of the village and valley of Santa Ynez (aka Santa Ines, as the Solvang Mission is named). But running coyly counter to both type and legacy, the artist has rendered this "virgin martyr" saint in a style akin to famed Austrian sensualist Gustav Klimt.

In a perhaps unintended

tentacle of relevance to this exhibition's overview, St. Agnes is the patron saint of not only virgins, children and victims of sexual assault, but also gardeners. The power of the garden — enchanted, metaphorical and practically speaking — scores again. ■



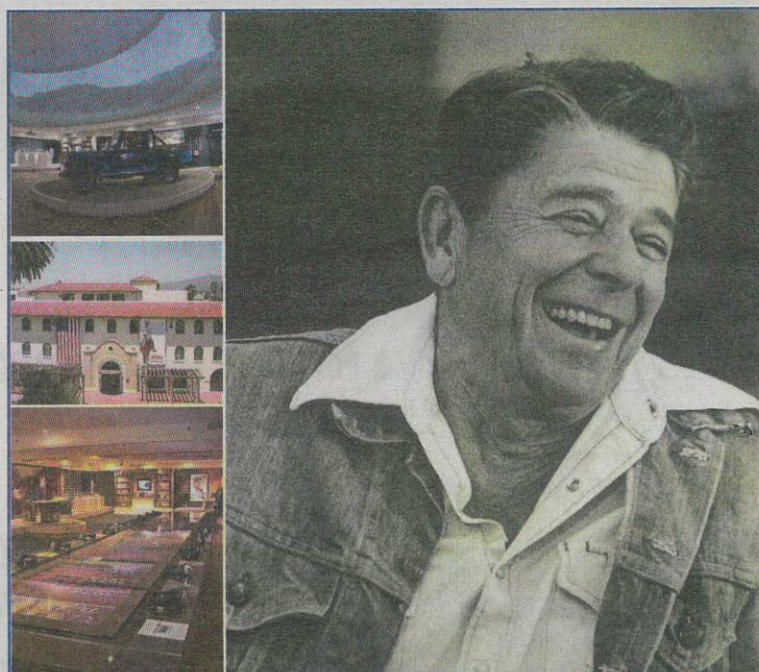
Leonore Tolegian Hughes' "The Reason For The Seasons" gallery wall



Watercolor Collage by Leonore Tolegian Hughes



Country Life by Leonore Tolegian Hughes



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