

Julie Heffernan



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Beautiful, intriguing exhibits opening at
San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts

By Laura Romer Huckaby
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Julie Heffernan "*Self Portrait as Standing My Ground*" 2016 oil on canvas 68 x 66 in
(Courtesy of Catharine Clark Gallery)

SAN ANGELO — “The Garden of Earthly Delights” is the modern name given to the enigmatic triptych by Netherlandish painter Hieronymus Bosch (c. 1450 – 1516). Perhaps no other work in art history has captured the imaginations of so many scholars, authors, artists, musicians and poets (not to mention ordinary people). It is beautiful and disturbing, comical and grotesque, nonsensical and satirical at the same time.

Its center panel, for which it is named, opens on a lush dreamscape, filled with nude people, giant fruit, fantastical flowers and weird animals. Interpretations of the triptych range from the standard — it’s a late medieval morality tale, warning against sin — to the psychedelic — the artist was under the influence of hallucinogens — to the political and everything in between. No one seems to know what this painting is really about, and its mystique adds to its appeal.

“The Garden of Earthly Delights” is also what we are calling a group of two exhibits opening Thursday, Oct. 5, at the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts, 1 Love St. The exhibits feature the work of two contemporary artists: paintings by Julie Heffernan and sculpture by Kathleen Elliot.

Like Bosch’s masterpiece, the works of these two artists draw the viewer in with their sublime beauty and then reveal that they have something to say, something that might disturb us out of our comfort zone. Heffernan’s large oil paintings comment on our broken relationship with the natural world, and therefore our precarious place within it. Elliot’s whimsical glass and mixed media sculptures explore the idea of what is real, and invite viewers to question what they are seeing, both in the gallery and in life.

Our third exhibit opening on Oct. 5 has already generated a considerable amount of delight because it showcases an important New York collection of ceramics recently donated to the museum, to reside permanently here in San Angelo. “The Ehrlich Collection of American and British Ceramics” includes megastars of ceramic art such as Robert Arneson, Peter Voulkos and Betty Woodman, and from “over the pond,” Dame Lucie Rie, Hans Coper, Jennifer Lee, Sir David Leach and others. A total of 60 works have come to SAMFA from Edith Ehrlich and her late husband, Daniel, who began collecting ceramics in the 1970s. The gift also includes Canadian, African and ancient Chinese pieces that will grow the depth and breadth of our already nationally known ceramics collection.

The exhibits “The Garden of Earthly Delights” and “The Ehrlich Collection of American and British Ceramics” will open at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 5. The opening is free and open to the public, and there will be refreshments and live music.

The exhibits will remain on display until Dec. 3. For more information, call the San Angelo Museum of Fine Arts at 653-3333 or visit our website at www.samfa.org.