

# Santa Rosa sculpture exhibit weighs 'Question of Balance'

The works featured in "A Question of Balance" can refer to gravity, to mathematics, to accounting, or to opposing ideas or components, according to the Museum of Sonoma County executive director. |

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Catherine Daley, vice president and exhibitions chair for Pacific Rim Sculptors, left, Jeff Nathanson, Museum of Sonoma County executive director and art curator, and Briona Hendren, sculpture artist and operations manager for Pacific Rim Sculptors, move artist Jan Blythe's sculpture Step Up at the Museum of Sonoma County in Santa Rosa on Monday, Jan. 22, 2024. (Christopher Chung / The Press Democrat)



Symbiosis, by artist Cheryl Coon, is part of the Museum of Sonoma County exhibit "A Question of Balance: Selected Works from Pacific Rim Sculptors." Photo taken in Santa Rosa on Monday, Jan. 22, 2024. (Christopher Chung / The Press Democrat)





Briona Hendren, sculpture artist and operations manager for Pacific Rim Sculptors, left, Jeff Nathanson, Museum of Sonoma County executive director and art curator, and Catherine Daley, vice president and exhibitions chair for Pacific Rim Sculptors, move artist Stan Huncilman's sculpture Harappan Meditation at the Museum of Sonoma County in Santa Rosa, Monday, Jan. 22, 2024. (Christopher Chung / The Press Democrat)

Jeff Nathanson, executive director of the Museum of Sonoma County, was driven to launch the venue's newest exhibit by a single thought, simply expressed.

"We needed a theme," he said, "and the world seems so out of balance. We agreed this idea might inspire the artists to be creative and think more broadly."

"A Question of Balance" opens Saturday at the downtown Santa Rosa museum, showcasing works from each of the 45 featured sculptors. Many of the entries were created specifically for this exhibit.

Balance can refer to gravity, to mathematics, to accounting, or to opposing ideas or components, Nathanson said.

“That’s one of the things about art,” he explained. “You can work out so many issues in life. We all need to process.”

Balance is commonly defined as a state of equilibrium or equipoise, equal distribution of weight or amount, or something used to produce equilibrium.

Whether the artists took the concept of balance literally, conceptually or tangentially, they were encouraged to choose their own materials, techniques, and subject matter, or a combination of concepts, to address the theme of balance.

Despite the basic simplicity of the concept, the artists produced a surprising variety of work, and mounting the exhibit required considerable effort and collaboration.

The museum staff worked with Pacific Rim Sculptors, a San Francisco-based association of some 150 artists —some of whom supplied the sculptures displayed in the exhibit.

The theme of the show may seem abstract, but it comes through clearly in the individual sculptures.

“Step Up,” a five-step wooden staircase on a rocker-shaped base, created by Jan Blythe, of Lafayette, is plainly about maintaining balance against the odds.

“Block and Tackle,” by Susan Amorde of Los Angeles, features four large suitcases interwoven in a long thick rope, hanging from the ceiling and weighted down on the floor by an anchor.

“It’s about baggage” — the mental and emotional weight we all carry — said Catherine Daley, a Windsor sculptor whose work also is included in the exhibit. Besides being an artist, Daley is also a Pacific Rim Sculptors board member and vice president.

Daley’s piece in the show, “Ripple,” also hangs from the ceiling, on a stainless steel cable that stretches from a top mirror to a bronze weight suspended above a bottom mirror on a pedestal.

"When you look into it, you become part of it," she said of her sculpture. "It's about the ripple effect, the notion that what you do has unforeseeable consequences."

"Kissed Seeds," by Cheryl Coon of Lafayette, features dozens of shapes resembling micro-organisms, made out of black zip ties displayed against a white wall.

"I like how the work comes out from the wall," said Kate Eilertsen, who collaborated with the Museum of Sonoma County in choosing works for the exhibit.

Nathanson invited Eilertsen, executive director at di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art in Napa, to help him jury the entries for the show.

"I've always wanted to work with Jeff," she said. "And I've always loved sculpture. With each piece, we were strict about the theme of the show."

Santa Rosa sculptor Briona Hendren, operations manager for Pacific Rim Sculptors, helped organize the exhibit and contributed one of her own works, "Two Halves of a Whole," made of cast iron, gun bluing and olive oil.

"This question of balance is really important in the world right now," she said.

Pacific Rim Sculptors, with roots dating back to the 1980s San Francisco art scene, has members in the Bay Area, along the West Coast and elsewhere around the continent and the world.

It is a chapter of the International Sculpture Center, which publishes Sculpture magazine, based in Hamilton, New Jersey, near Princeton. For more information about the parent organization, visit [sculpture.org](http://sculpture.org).

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