

cism of these works shows a Northwest icon at the height of his powers, injecting fresh moxie into his oeuvre.

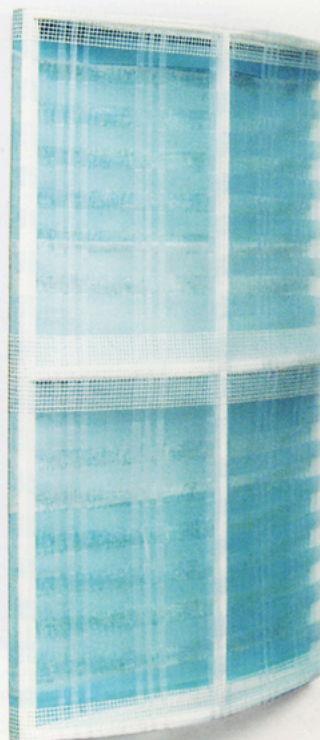
—RICHARD SPEER

PACIFICA, CA
THEODORA VARNAY JONES
and TOM BILLS
at Sanchez Art Center

Two artists more dissimilar than Theodora Varnay Jones and Tom Bills could scarcely be found, yet their works—as seen in this exhibit at Sanchez Art Center curated by Don Soker—complement each other perfectly. The air and water evoked by her delicate, translucent, atmospheric planar constructions contrast well with the fire and earth of his heavy, blunt steles and altar landscapes (my terminology). Both artists are reluctant to be interpreted in terms of narrative or metaphor, yet the works seem to invite and even demand it, such is their rich allusiveness.

Varnay Jones assembles medium-sized wall sculptures that accord the viewer an almost ecstatic experience of color modulated by depth and translucency. Her *Transparency* series is composed of rectangular or slightly variant shapes—some slightly concave or convex—over which a membrane of acrylic polymer sheeting is tautly stretched. The underlying wooden framework's struts, louvers and internal planes ("buried, on the bottom, like childhood memories") are colored with acrylic paint or colored pencil, and the glistening transparent skins through which we peer into its depths are coated with layers of blue, green or gray acrylic paint glazing. The ridged brushstrokes form a surface undulation that shimmers as the viewer's eye travels across, irresistibly suggesting gently rippling waves. The lulling, hypnotic surface and the contrasting geometric framework are tantalizing—as if we saw earth from space and discerned, beneath the clouds and waves, lines of latitude and longitude in the shallows.

Bill's wall reliefs and freestanding sculptures take us, by contrast, down into the world of artifacts and artists, primitive and modern. "I want my sculptures to have...that presence that individuals have," he has said. Consequently, for all their abstraction, there's a willful, embattled



quality about these ragged survivors made of scorched and rusted metal and unfinished concrete and wood, and redolent of the smoky forge. *First Things First* and *The Occupation* are large pieces composed of concrete posts and lintels supporting stepped bases on which rough, ovoid, sacred precincts are demarcated with metal fences or palisades; recalling prehistoric megaliths and ancient temples, they tap into the archaic, as many past artists, including Picasso and Pollock, have done. His smaller pieces resemble fragments of some ruined scavenged machine (*7 Guards*) or obscure pictographs or heraldic symbols (*Waiting, Waiting*), with the polished zinc symbols either holding their rusted steel turf like warriors—or buried beneath it.

—DEWITT CHENG

SANTA CLARA, CA
SANDY WALKER
at the Triton Museum of Art

Featured in this show of Oakland-based artist Sandy Walker are two series of large wood-block prints of figures in motion. Based on drawings of models moving around his studio, they highlight the artist's



ABOVE:
 "TRANSPARENCY #28," 2006
Theodora Varnay Jones

PAPER, PIGMENTS, GAUZE, ACRYLIC POLYMER,
 WOOD STRUCTURE
 19" x 12" x 2"

LEFT:
 "VERTICAL DALE," 2006
Tom Bills

CAST CEMENT AND STAINLESS STEEL
 23" x 7" x 8"