

Artists' Talk: Exploring the Art of Nancy Genn and Jim Melchert

On Sunday, August 14, Pacifica and other art lovers gathered at Sanchez Art Center to hear Nancy Genn and Jim Melchert talk about their work in a panel discussion led by curator Hanna Regev. This was the closing day of *Mining the Cracks, Drips, and Markings*, a joint exhibit by Genn and Melchert that was curated by Regev and was on view from July 8 through August 14.

The artworks of Genn and Melchert seem quite different on the surface—Melchert's broken ceramic tiles contrast with Genn's flowing casein paintings and rounded grape vine-based sculptures. But as curator Regev demonstrated with her penetrating questions, when one looks below the surface, the artists share a conceptual approach to their work and a reliance on rhythm and repetition.

It is significant that both artists were making new beginnings in this exhibit. Genn's earlier works were more geometric and more brightly colored, and she consciously chose to show a new body of work. Genn said she drew on some of her earliest influences, a love of calligraphy and her early exposure to Asian art and culture. Her casein "Rainbars" paintings capture the essence of water and flow, with their blues and greens in measured drips across large hanging paper scrolls.



Melchert had just completed work for an exhibit at the Gallery Paule Anglim in San Francisco, and decided to make all new works for the Pacifica exhibit. His process involves breaking porcelain tiles in order to explore the shapes and lines thus created, and then drawing, glazing, and reassembling the pieces into a new creation. Melchert said that when it came time to title these new pieces, he realized they reminded him of music, and he named them accordingly. Both artists spoke about the function of repetition in their work. Melchert mentioned that repetition is like the rhythms of our own heartbeat and breath. Regev asked about the use of the color gray. Genn emphasized that to her gray is definitely a color, not an absence of color, and Melchert talked about gray conceptually as an in-between color, a place to make decisions. A writer in the audience asked what each artist did when they hit an artistic dry spell, the equivalent of writer's block. Both Genn and Melchert replied that it was important to keep working anyway,

to pick up a brush and do something to get one's interest and inspiration flowing again. All in all, it was a fascinating and inspiring afternoon.

Sanchez Art Center's Artist/Curator Talks are generally held on the closing day of an exhibit. The series, which is free to the public, offers in-depth insight into the works of the well-known artists who exhibit in the Art Center's Main Gallery, and a chance to ask questions and interact with the artists. Sanchez Art Center is located at 1220-B Linda Mar Blvd. For more information, call 650-355-1894 or visit www.sanchezartcenter.org.