

EXPLORING

'Being & Nothingness'

New San Pedro gallery showcases some astonishing pieces

By Shirle Gottlieb

Special to the Press-Telegram

Sunyata Gallery is rapidly establishing itself as a provocative place where visitors can expect to be challenged by a wide gamut of contemporary visual expression. You never know what you'll see there. Taking its name from a Tibetan Buddhist term that means "the emptiness from which all creation flows," the fledgling gallery's mission statement is simply: "There is no mission."

"Southern California is going through a period of transformation and re-invention," says Don O'Melveny, who opened Sunyata in downtown San Pedro just seven months ago. He wants his gallery to reflect the construction/deconstruction/reconstruction that is taking place here.

Currently on view is the astonishing artwork of Yong Sin. Since everything this young Korean artist produces is called "Being & Nothingness," the eight large-scale, mixed-media works on display are identifiable only by numbers.

A quiet, shy, hard-working woman whose entire life is devoted to her art, Sin says her work is rooted in the existential humanism of French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre. Especially his book, "Being and Nothingness," which declares that as free beings we are each responsible for our own human existence. And by extension, we each define ourselves by what we pay attention to.

Applying this concept to her art, Sin's entire oeuvre is a constant struggle between the responsibility of existence (being) and its absolute opposite – the void of nothingness. She feels threatened by both of them.

In her arduous endeavor to express this philosophy in visual terms, Sin follows the methodology set forth in The Myth of Sisyphus:



"Being & Nothingness No. 14" by Yong Sin.

ART REVIEW

What: "Being & Nothingness," by Yong Sin

Where: Sunyata, 331 W. 7th St., San Pedro

When: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday, through July 11

Information: (310) 832-5516

She creates art that requires repeating the same task, over and over, thousands of times. Absorbed in this daily, self-imposed work, Sin demonstrates her existence.

One of the most fascinating works in the gallery is "Being & Nothingness, No. 4." Here we see literally hundreds of miniature, cut-out portraits of people – all of them faceless – glued in overall patterns of repetitive horizontal bands. By making them nameless, faceless, and unidentifiable, these people have virtually vanished – disappeared off the face of the earth into "nothingness."

Equally captivating is No. 3. Consisting of 20 panels that form along, horizontal format, it is covered with thousands of strips of Johnson & Johnson Band-Aids that are stained with red paint to resemble blood. Written on each and every strip are the words, "Being & Nothingness." This work not only leaves you speechless, it definitely connotes the concept of life and "being."

Two of the largest works in the exhibit consist of thousands of tiny, cut out, pastel shapes that resemble abstract cigarettes. It is absolutely mind-boggling to think of the amount of time and work that went into these compositions.

If you haven't been over to Sunyata yet, you'll be surprised at the upgrade and new development in downtown San Pedro. In addition, San Pedro's Old Town now hosts "First Thursdays" – an open house of all art studios, galleries and restaurants from 6 to 9 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month.

Shirle Gottlieb is a Long Beach free-lance art critic.



Liv Tyler

Armageddon theaters this

Coming to theaters V is "Armageddon," Bruce Willis in an world epic about an asteroid collision course with Earth. Also starring Billy Bob Thornton, Buscemi, Ben Affleck and Tyler. This movie is rated

Concerts

• Conductor Richard K joined by master tap dancer Warkentien and the Cort Alexander Trio of vocalists program that includes John Williams' "Liberty Fanfare," Holdridge's "Jefferson T. Morton Gould's "Tap Dance,"

John Denver's "A Melody of Remembrance," Ward and Dragon's "America the Beautiful" with fireworks Saturday at the Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre, 8808 Irvine Center Drive. For tickets, \$13-\$54, call Ticketmaster at (213) 480-3232.



Pacific Symphony Orchestra

• Johnny "Secret Agent" Rivers will perform at 9 p.m. at the House of Blues, 8801 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood, and signing copies of his new album "Last Train to Memphis." Wednesday at the House of Blues, 8801 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood, \$20, call the House of Blues at (213) 848-5100 or Ticketmaster at (213) 480-3232.

Events