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DAVE BARTON JANUARY 25, 2018 — [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)



Chris Natrop's watercolor, metallic powder, glitter on hand-cut paper, string, yarn, projected video, lighting from 2015.

Photo by Dave Barton

There's a quote from Henri Matisse on the patio outside the Irvine Fine Arts Center: "There are always flowers for those who want to see them." Curator Yevgeniya Mikhailik's multidisciplinary group show "LAND" invites us to examine our rocky relationship with nature, and while there aren't any flowers to speak of and rarely did many of the creations inside move us, there are a handful that help us look at the familiar with fresh insight.

Jennifer Celio's *Rising and Falling (Antarctica)* is a geometric beauty. Painted icebergs lie under plexiglass as if something ancient in a museum, as cellphone tower antennae spread out among them; a slow melt is suggested by empty silhouettes and the drop and drip of floor-mirror puddles. Virginia Katz's handmade monoprint collagraphs resemble closeups of marble gra cracked ice or photographs of ocean depths taken from space, bringing us closer to evocations of the real world while also having nothing to do with it. Christine Weir's graphite-on-gray panel drawings are meant to be meditative exercises, the monochromatic pictures corresponding to clouds or landforms against a circular backdrop that may or may not be the sun. Instead, they feel like a suffocating view from under the ground, looking up. Christine Nguyen's seashell and meteorite ceramics aren't polished enough to draw attention, but her evocations of an eclipse—puffs of spray paint around a black circle—are beatific in their simplicity.

The personal potential for healing the environment is given a moving poetic with Kiyomi Fukui's *Apologetic Garden*: Write a note on a sheet of paper, put it in an envelope along with some seeds, and then bury it in a small triangular planter on the outside patio. Come back in a few weeks to see if anything has sprouted. Likewise, Michael Nannery's *Leaves Tell the Story of the Light* is his sensitive pruning and care for a forgotten plant in the corner of the Center, bringing our consideration to something barely paid attention to. Chris Natrop's stunning multimedia *Halloween Candybowl Mashup* in Gallery 1 is the most assured, the installation's complexity in sharp contrast to other artists' austerity. Colored lights reflect off ornate, painted, cut paper suspended from the ceiling, drifting gently just inches from the floor. Shadows are cast on filmed projections, the camera aimed at the sky and run through filters. The soundtrack of birds chirping is melodic and inviting, the warmth of the machinery giving the room a pleasant welcoming feel, reminding us of nature's potential for paradise.

"LAND" at Irvine Fine Arts Center, 14321 Yale Ave., Irvine, (949) 724-6880;
www.cityofirvine.org/irvine-fine-arts-center/current-exhibitions. Open Mon.-Thurs., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.;
Sat., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Through March 10. Free.



Dave Barton

Dave Barton has written for the OC Weekly for over twenty years, the last eight as their lead art critic. He has interviewed artists from punk rock photographer Edward Colver to monologist Mike Daisey, playwright Joe Penhall to culture jammer Ron English.