

Women's Work: Masculinity and Gender in Contemporary Fiber Art, Maker Faire and Puppets and Jazz

By CityBeat Staff

Our top three picks of things to do in San Diego this week



HANGING BY A THREAD

Fabric and fiber arts often get a bad rap for being too fringe. Too stuffy. Too, well, boring.

That's not the case with Women's Work: Masculinity and Gender in Contemporary Fiber Art, a bold and provocative new exhibition opening Friday, Oct. 2 from 6 to 8 p.m. and runs through Nov. 15 at the San Diego Art Institute (1439 El Prado). The exhibition takes its name from the ideas presented in the 1984 book by art historian Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine*, which examined women's relationship to the medium. Not many people are aware of the fact that fiber arts played a huge role in the Industrial Revolution, the women's Suffrage Movement and the Feminism movement of the '70s. Moreover, third-wave feminism and the Riot grrd punk-rock movement all have connections to modern fiber arts and what came to be called "craftivism."

"I love embroidery as a technique, so much so, that I have a love for any type of embroidery regardless of its gaudiness," says Mexican-born, Fresno-based artist Blanca Amezcua, who will be showcasing some of her delightfully crass *servilletas*, or napkinsat the exhibition.

She says they were inspired by depictions of women in Mexican comic books. "Where I'm from, the *servilletas* are usually embroidered and crocheted by women. I began to sense power in them. The closer I came to understand what they could represent, the more I wanted to push the envelope and have them speak a different language, without losing their female technical integrity."

The title, *Women's Work*, is decidedly tongue-in-cheek, and features work from more than a dozen local and international male and female artists. Highlights include Kris Grey's "Gender/Power," an embroidered work that conveys his transition from female to male, and Denmark-based Rose Eken's images of rock 'n' roll culture.

"Artistic techniques and styles are not as gender specific as they used to be," says Amezcua. "These types of shows can continue to teach us this."



San Diego Maker Faire

Like an elite show-and-tell, Southern California's first full-scale Maker Faire aims to bring out the science geek in everyone. This family-friendly event gives engineers, hobbyists, artists and inventors of all kinds an avenue to showcase their works in an environment that encourages innovation and exploration. Some of this year's participants include a fire-breathing robot made almost entirely from recycled material and an electronic, self-playing piano with an LED screen that correlates moving patterns and colors to the music. Patrons can also play with a giant bubble wand, make their own homemade slime or just peruse the fair's many other hands-on exhibits and creations. It all goes down **Saturday**, **Oct. 3** and **Sunday**, **Oct. 4** from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 10 Balboa Park museums, as well as the Plaza de Panama. Tickets are \$12.50 to \$30.



Adult Puppet Cabaret Stage
Photo by lain Gunn

BRASS AND STRINGS

Listening to some live jazz with a drink in hand already sounds like a satisfying start to the weekend. Add some puppets and have it all go down on a farm and, well, that's unique. Puppets and Jazz on Friday, Oct. 2, features puppeteer duo Animal Cracker Conspiracy debuting their handmade outdoor stage for an adult puppet cabaret show, which unfolds to the saxophone-filled sounds of musicians like Trio Gadjo and DJ Tah Rei. From 7 to 10 p.m., patrons can build puppets using supplied materials, sip a cocktail or take a seat on a hay bale while the performances play out. Pam Severn, Nick Slavicek and Strings & Things are a few of the experienced puppeteers performing. What's more, all of this plays out on ACC's beautiful 2.3-acre Hearth Farm (2323 Euclid Ave.). Tickets are \$15 at the door and cash is encouraged.