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VISUAL ARTS

Beyond boundaries

Regional artists a reflection of world at large

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REVIEW

"Within State Lines"

Through June 24. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays. Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, 1447 Peachtree St., Atlanta. 404-881-1109, www.mocaga.org.

Verdict: A beautifully presented selection of statewide art.

Yes, there is Georgia art outside Atlanta.

Annette Cone-Skelton, director of the Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia, reminds us of this obvious fact in the exhibition "Within State Lines." She has chosen to present two artists each from Athens, Augusta, LaGrange, and Savannah who have not previously exhibited at MOCA GA.

As you might expect from artists who (for the most part) teach in colleges and universities in these four locales, there's only occasional recognition of regional subject matter.

Tom Nakashima of Augusta comes closest with his painting "Black and White Orchardhouse," and even this seems to bear a message beyond documentation. (Compare his "Huddled Masses," which appears to be a simple landscape until you notice the collage of newspaper stock market quotes and photos of Americans of various ethnicities.)

Carter Davis might reflect aspects of Athens in his dizzying combination of bits of cityscape that don't quite fit together, but that is scarcely self-evident. There is certainly little of Savannah in Pang-Chieh Hsu's brilliantly composed "Happy Together," a tightly painted still life combining candle, bird cage, glass vessel and cut of raw meat.

But of course, that is the point. Most art responds to global currents, not local ones. Margaret Reneke's scratchboard "Hercules and the Sea Monster" reflects Greek mythology, not LaGrange. John Lawrence's "Vanitas Series" of black-and-white photographs includes a few possible LaGrange markers (a Southern leaf -- magnolia? - adjacent to a classic Greek portrait bust in "Oracle at Delphi"), but most of his objects are generalized.

Brian Rust's wonderfully carved stacked-object sculptures -- featuring oversize hearts, hands and less identifiable things -- succeed as gloriously as the other work in this exhibition, without showing any particular Augusta inflections. And Julio Garcia's exquisitely worked semi-geometric paintings bear no indications of his Savannah location or personal origins.

The glistening strands of **Andi Steele's** monofilament piece "Three Ways Out" are responsive to place, but only to the gallery across which they stretch. The work of this Watkinsville (Athens) artist belongs to a global family of art that makes the viewer reconsider space by blocking the way.

"Within State Lines" demonstrates the stylistic and geographic diversity of Georgia art. Sophisticated work is

"Within State Lines" demonstrates the stylistic and geographic diversity of Georgia art. Sophisticated work is also being done in locales from Statesboro, Milledgeville and Carrollton to Swainsboro and beyond.

Significant art is shown in Dahlonega, Dalton, Louisville and Concord. (Yes, the last two are in Georgia.) Some of it responds to local circumstances.

Cone-Skelton's show should begin a dialogue about the art out there that is too often overlooked.

Photo

Works at Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia represent many areas of the state: Above: "Black and White Orchardhouse," Tom Nakashima, Augusta.

Photo

Works at Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia represent many areas of the state: Left: "Taking Another Trip," Carter Davis, Athens.

Photo

Works at Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia represent many areas of the state: Far left: "LaFon's Orchids," John Lawrence, LaGrange.

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