UC SANTA BARBARA
THE Current

May 21, 2014
Andrea Estrada

Cheadle Hall Art Gallery

On one wall, images of clouds float serenely from one side of a 60-inch video screen to the other. Across from it, a huge seedpod, overlain with cactus leaves, hangs from the ceiling. A yarn-covered appendage resembling a giant horn extends from the side and gives the entire piece a decidedly Seussian flair. And, in a way, that's what sculptor Luis Velasquez intended.

A second seedpod sculpture hangs from the branch of a huge tree between Cheadle and Campbell halls. While he sought to infuse a touch of humor into his work, he also wanted the pods to be, as he said, "a treat to the dreamers, to the people who look to the sky."

These pieces — "Looking Up" by Joanna Sleigh and Velasquez's "Seedpod" — are part of the Inaugural Cheadle Hall Undergraduate Art Exhibition at UC Santa Barbara, a group show featuring work by students from the campus's College of Letters and Science and the College of Creative Studies. The show is curated by members of the UCSB departments of art and of history of art and architecture and the campus's Art, Design & Architecture Museum, from an undergraduate exhibition that took place in December. The Cheadle Hall exhibition was installed under the direction of Elyse Gonzales and Mehmet Doğu, curator of exhibits and exhibition designer, respectively, at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum.

"We are grateful for the many opportunities to show student work within our department and in public space on campus, but this is the first time such an important building for all of campus supported a juried showcase of undergraduate

student artwork," said Jane Mulfinger, UCSB professor and chair of art and the primary organizer of the show.

For Megan Fisher, a senior double majoring in art and English, being part of the inaugural exhibition is a great honor. Her work, which includes two photographs — or "liquid paintings," as she described them — and a set of vinyl tree rings, explored the natural environment from both micro and macro lenses.

"I'm a senior and I feel like I'm giving back to my school in a sense," she said. "And I think there can always be more art everywhere. I never think there's enough art. We have only one gallery in the art department, and students never get to show their art as much as they should be able to."

Fisher noted that installing the vinyl tree rings, which are meant to highlight issues of deforestation and the amount of paper consumption in the world, proved to be a valuable experience. "Three people came up to talk to me about it and about the process," she said. "Everyone is interested in art; they just don't always know where to look and where to find it."

According to David Marshall, dean of humanities and fine arts in the College of Letters and Science at UCSB, the exhibition is symbolically important because it shows the university as a creative venue. "We have a strong arts program here with national distinction in various ways," he said. "Our students receive excellent training from faculty members whose work has shown in some of the most interesting and prestigious venues around the world.

"It's worth noting, too, that this is also undergraduate research," Marshall continued. "At UC, we consider art to be research. This is a way for people to instantly see some of the ways in which we engage our students in the creative process."

Added Marc Fisher, senior associate vice chancellor for administrative services and one of the organizers of the exhibition: "It makes a statement to have the work of our students shown in the administration building. It helps remind us of why we're here."

While the inaugural show highlights UCSB undergraduate art majors in the College of Letters and Science and the College of Creative Studies, art department courses now welcome the enrollment of students from across campus. In the future, student work for the Cheadle exhibitions may come from a broad spectrum of diverse majors at

UCSB, according to Mulfinger.

“Undergraduates choose majors, but the whole point of a liberal arts education is that it is multifaceted,” said Marshall. “We also have many double-majors — students who major in art and biology, dance and chemistry; there are violinists from the College of Engineering. That’s what we want from our undergraduates.”

The exhibition continues through June 30. A reception is planned for Thursday, May 29, from 4 to 5:30 p.m., featuring the Department of Music’s Young Artist String Quartet.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.