

## Culture Lust

# Family Matters At Sushi Performance And Visual Art

By [Angela Carone](#)

March 5, 2010

An audio recording of this interview will be posted here within a few hours of the live broadcast. A transcript will also be added within 24 hours. Thank you for your patience.

I was on the radio this morning, talking about a new exhibit at Sushi Performance and Visual Art (see transcript below or audio to hear the music). "[Family Matters](#)" is on view through April 24th. The opening is tonight, a musical performance takes place Saturday night, and a film screening and panel discussion takes place on March 12th.

DWANE BROWN: A new exhibit at [Sushi](#) in downtown San Diego includes a musical act from Canada and a sculptor who makes playground structures for adults. Here to tell us about it is KPBS arts producer Angela Carone. Angela, the exhibit is called [Family Matters](#), tell us about it.

ANGELA CARONE: It's a relatively small group show, there are five artists total, but for its size, it's really diverse.

The curator, Brian Goeltzenleuchter, wanted to bring together artists who are interested in the history of the avant garde, but who are also making work informed by today's pop culture. This led him to include artists who work in sculpture, performance art, film, and music.



PAMELA DAVIS: Which brings us to the Cedar Tavern Singers. They are a duo from Canada, what can you tell us about them.

ANGELA CARONE: I can tell you that I just discovered them through this show and I listened to their music all day yesterday and I just had a blast with it.

The Cedar Tavern Singers are Dan Wong and Mary-Anne McTrowe and they are both visual artists who make folk music about art. You could say they fit in the art rock genre, but with less emphasis on the rock part.

That's because both play the ukulele. They also play harmonica, and the glockenspiel and some smaller percussion instruments. So definitely not a rock outfit. Their act is much more about storytelling and seems to



Above: Dan Wong and Mary-Anne McTrowe of the Cedar Tavern Singers.

have a real quirky charm to it.

DWANE BROWN: You said that make folk music ABOUT art?

ANGELA CARONE: That's right. The curator described their show as art history set to folk music, but I would add one caveat to that, it's really contemporary art history. And they sing about it with humor and irony.

They write songs about famous artists like Robert Smithson --- our listeners may know his famous earthworks like "Spiral Jetty" and other artists like Bruce Nauman and the conceptual artist John Baldessari, who actually grew up in National City and went to school here at SDSU before becoming a renown artist.

In fact I'd like to play a little of their song about Baldessari but it requires some set up. The song is called "I Will Not Make Anymore Boring Art" and it refers to a piece by Baldessari.

The story is that in 1971, Baldessari was asked to exhibit his work at an art school in Nova Scotia. The school didn't have any money to fly him up there so instead he sent a piece of paper that said, "I will not make any more boring art," and instructed the school to recruit students to write the sentence repeatedly all over the gallery walls, as if they were being punishment. This is considered one of his first great conceptual works and the Cedar Tavern Singers commemorate this in their song, let's listen to some of it.

(MUSIC)

PAMELA DAVIS: Did they have back-up singers there?

ANGELA CARONE: No that's Wong and McTrowe, they just digitized their voices to sound like children. And McTrowe told me that when they perform this song live, they get the audience to sing the refrain with them. So you can imagine this room full of people all singing the chorus "I Will Not Make Any More Boring Art." How can you not go and sing along? And they include a lot of audience participation, and they get the audience to sing in rounds.

DWANE BROWN: The Cedar Tavern Singers perform on Saturday night but there is also artwork in this show - and the opening for that is tonight?



Above: An Oscar Prinsen sculpture, one of his playground structures for adults.

ANGELA CARONE: Yes, there are four other artists exhibiting in the show, including a Dutch artist named Oscar Prinsen who has never shown in the States before. He's shown throughout Europe and Holland, but never here. Prinsen makes what he calls playground equipment for adults that involve ladders and chairs suspended in the air. You have to see it, and maybe climb it, to get a handle on what he's after. I do know that Prinsen is interested in creating opportunities for contact between people so his work is geared toward that and apparently he takes on the persona of a self-help guru to make that happen – so his work is both sculptural and performance art.

PAMELA DAVIS: The exhibit "Family Matters" opens

tonight and the Cedar Tavern Singers perform tomorrow night at Sushi. You can learn more about these and other arts events on Angela's Culture Lust blog.

© 2010 KPBS