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Parts of a whole

Artist Brian Goeltzenleuchter has control of Sushi's gallery space for the next few months—here's how he'll use it

By Kelly Davis



Brian Goeltzenleuchter

You can't fully appreciate Brian Goeltzenleuchter as a curator unless you know a little something about him. He's the guy whose 2009 *Institutional Wellbeing* exhibit at the Oceanside Museum of Art—a show for which he blended an unlikely combination of performance art, custom fragrance and applied kinesiology to produce a critique of consumer culture and art-as-entertainment. It wasn't much different than conceptual-art installations Goeltzenleuchter has exhibited nationally and internationally, but this is traditionally minded San Diego and the exhibit didn't go over too well with some museum-goers. (You can see photos of the exhibit at Bgprojects.com.)

Then there's Contraposto Home Décor, his "home accents" business / art experiment that's best experienced (www.cphomedecor.com) rather than described.

The 34-year-old artist, who earned his master's degree from UCSD's highly regarded visual-arts program, is all about double takes, deeper meanings and irony's aesthetic value. He wants the viewer to ponder why a piece of art exists and how it came to be. But, amid all that pondering, there should be a mutual sense of play.

"The beauty of irony is that it's inherently equivocal," he said. "You're never going to be able to pin it down. So if you create artwork factoring it in, then—boom—it makes it fun for the artist because the artwork's always changing."

Beginning this month, Goeltzenleuchter is responsible for filling Sushi



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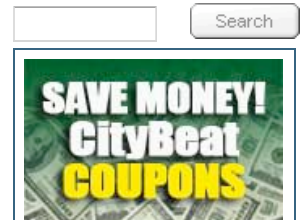
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Performance and Visual Art's small gallery space in the nonprofit's relatively new East Village home (www.sushiart.org). He has four shows planned, possibly a fifth. The first in the series, documentary photographer Stephen Chalmers' *Snowbirds*—which captures Southern California RV culture—is up through Jan. 30.



"Bill Zellers" by Stephen Chalmers

Chalmers began his professional life as an EMT and went on to get a degree in psychology and work with troubled kids. His work, Goeltzenleuchter said, "has all of the markings of photojournalism, but there's this psychology that comes through the work that kind of transcends just straight-ahead photojournalism."

Snowbirds is relatively light fare compared with the two projects Chalmers worked on concurrently with *Snowbirds*—the stunning, haunting *Dumpsites*, which comprises landscape photographs of places where serial killers dumped their victims, and *In Memoriam*, photographs of roadside memorials across the U.S.

Sushi's gallery space is small—only 16 of Chalmers' photographs are on display out of 40 in the series—but they're photographs you want to take time with. He used a Hasselblad Super Wide camera that, literally, captures the world that surrounds his subjects—the nuance and, sometimes, contradictions in their lives. In Chalmers' photograph of former science teacher Mike Bright, for instance, empty Budweiser cans cover the top of the stove Bright is sitting next to. But just above the stove is a glossy, pristine gourmet food calendar. In another photo, a bright-white bottle of Johnson's Baby Powder stands out amid a parolee's odd assortment of begrimed personal items.

When *Snowbirds* comes down, Dave Ghilarducci's *Circle of Complications* moves in. Like Chalmers, Ghilarducci's first profession—engineering—was something other than art. Now he applies those skills to produce interactive sculptures.

"His work is hyper-technical," Goeltzenleuchter said, "but it's got this real playful quality about it, as well." The piece featured in *Circle of Complications* is reminiscent of a Spirograph—the kids drawing toy that produces geometric designs via different-sized rotors.

"You're giggling because they look like Spirograph drawings that we all probably made as a kid," Goeltzenleuchter said of the designs Ghilarducci's machine produces, "but at the same time, it's revealing all this math and science behind the Spirograph drawings and how even child's games... were created to instill in kids certain values that would make them responsible and useful adults."

Opening March 4 is a two-month exhibit called *Family Matters* that will feature a gallery show, film screening, music performance—by Canadian duo The Cedar Tavern Singers—and "street intervention" by Dutch artist Oscar Prinsen, who builds playground equipment for adults.

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Oscar Prinsen's "Conversation Rack"

Goeltzenleuchter describes *Family Matters'* participants as "art nerds"—emerging artists who blend the sublime absurdity of avant-garde art with the equally sublime absurdity of modern-day pop culture. One of those artists is Donna Stack, who turns domesticity on its head with her profane, yet beautifully made, welcome mats.

The May exhibit, *RUTV*, features the work of San Diego painter Leslie Nemour, whom Goeltzenleuchter describes as both a "painter's painter" and a TV junkie.

"She'll shoot stills from the TV set while she's watching TV and her paintings are meditations on those stills," he said. "It's a juxtaposition of the ubiquity of TV imagery—which you're not supposed to really pay attention to—and the real elegant still paintings that you're supposed to pay a great deal of attention to."

None of the shows, however, will feature Goeltzenleuchter's own work—something that's too bad for his admirers, but just fine with him.

"What I wanted to do with Sushi was just add something to the art community without that kind of fascist 'Hey look at what I'm doing as an artist.' I'd much rather push people forward who I think don't get a lot of play in San Diego," he said.

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