

Art



Battenberg's 'J.G. Sheds His Wolf's Clothing to Rise as a Raven'

A bronze bestiary in Walnut Creek

JOHN Battenberg's first comprehensive exhibition since the late '70s, opening Thursday at the Bedford Gallery at Walnut Creek's Regional Center for the Arts, will present the Bay Area artist in a new light. The show consists largely of recent work that has not yet received wide exposure.

A Midwesterner who came to the Bay Area to learn, and eventually teach, bronze casting in the early '60s, Battenberg is well-known hereabouts, thanks to his tenure as a professor (now retired) at San Jose State University and his large following.

Battenberg's first round of recognition came in the mid-'60s, with sculptures of hollowed-out aviators' clothes frozen in space, which expressed a desire to reclaim the past. His knack for dramatic statements was thus established early in his career, and it stirred up a good deal of critical response. So did his later surrealistic juxtapositions of female torsos as landscapes swarming with fallen warriors of Lilliputian scale. Then Bat-

John Battenberg: Three Decades

Where: Bedford Gallery, 1601 Civic Dr., Walnut Creek.

When: Noon-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays; until 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

Reception 6-9 p.m. Wednesday.

Call: (415) 295-1417

tenberg began to cast memorable realistic bronzes of women involved in erotically ambiguous situations.

More recently, he has focused on a whole bestiary of creatures of the wild, some of which can be interpreted as psychic self-portraits: charging bison, predatory birds and lone wolves, standing their ground.

Battenberg calls them "the main punch of the show," and these images, with their spiky, agitated lines, whether in bronze or wood sculptures or drawings or prints, are a distinctive signature.

— Dorothy Burkhart