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# The San Diego Union-Tribune.

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ART

## Small works and large efforts – each cast a giant shadow

By Robert L. Pincus  
ART CRITIC

December 24, 2006

Small scale was a large dimension of the indelible exhibitions in 2006, as in a show of 11 Goya portraits at the San Diego Museum of Art and one modest room of Guercinos at the Timken Museum of Art.

There were large-scale events too, like the sprawling Tijuana exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego and Roman de Salvo's big public sculpture, the ingenious "Nexus Eucalyptus," at the new Caltrans building in Old Town. But no top-notch shows were epic in size.

For some museums, it was a bellwether year. The San Diego Museum of Art marked its 80th anniversary with shows and signage that honored a history of patronage and collecting. Founding directors exited, too: Arthur Ollman at the Museum of Photographic Arts, Martha Longenecker at the Mingei International Museum. And new ones – Deborah Klochko at MoPA and Rob Sidner at the Mingei – inherited their mantles.



San Diego Museum of Art  
The exhibition "Goya's Portraits," though small, was stellar and included "Woman With a Mantilla and a Fan."

As for the shows that left the most enduring afterglow in 2006:

**1. "Goya's Portraits," San Diego Museum of Art (April 8-June 18)**

The museum's "The Marquis of Sofraga" (c. 1795) was in stellar company, with the presence of great borrowed portraits of aristocrats and friends of the Spanish luminary.

**2. "Breaking the Frame: Pioneering Women in Photojournalism," Museum of Photographic Arts (May 7-Sept. 24)**

It's widely known that Margaret Bourke-White made some great pictures in the 1930s, '40s and '50s, but some of her peers like Esther Bubley, Hansel Mieth and Grace Robertson had descended into semi-obscurity. This exhibition revealed why they shouldn't have.

**3. "Strange New World: Art and Design From Tijuana," Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (May 21-Sept. 17)**

The art scene has been burgeoning in this shape-shifting city and the many shapes of its art came forth in an exhibition that included elegant drawings, atmospheric paintings, in-your-face social commentary and even a billboard

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about border tensions along I-5.

**4. "Guercino: Stylistic Evolution in Focus," Timken Museum of Art (Oct. 13-Jan. 7, 2007)**

Except for two brief years serving a pope in Rome, Guercino spent nearly all his life working in and near Bologna. Some stellar pictures by the 17th-century old master have been assembled from across the United States and Europe.

**5. "Anne Mudge: Persistent Gestures," University Art Gallery, SDSU (April 3-May 3)**

Few sculptors make such full use of wire moving through space as this San Diego artist. None have made such inventive use of seeds. Fifteen years of work offered a visual feast.

**6. "Han Nguyen: "The Flow Series and the Model Home Series," Joseph Bellows Gallery (April 28-June 2)**

Tiny edifices of Nguyen's making gleamed like ivory in one set of photographs; watercolors mixed with water itself rippled through a second group. Both series demonstrated the persistent freshness of the San Diego artist's pictures.

**7. "American Ceramics, 1884-1972," San Diego Museum of Art (Feb. 25-Sept. 3)**

John Digesare, the museum's registrar, did revelatory research about the passion of its first director, Reginald Poland, for contemporary ceramics and surrounded Poland's early acquisitions with works that captured heady decades in the medium's history.

**8. "Belle Baranceanu: The Artist at Work," Museum of San Diego History (Sept. 15-May 29, 2007)**

She had moments of greatness and this early-to mid-20th-century painter also made ambitious murals, some of which survive. A first retrospective in two decades stylishly excavates her history.

**9. "Jay Bolotin: The Jackleg Testament," Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego (Dec. 18, 2005-April 30)**

He's retold the Genesis story in woodcuts, with a jack-in-the-box luring Eve from Eden, and turned these prints into a movie version of the same. Both pictures and film are strange and remarkable.

**10. "Shifting Baselines," California Center for the Arts Museum (March 10-July 4)**

Judit Hersko's shimmering sculptures of a heart and lungs looked as they were made of Capiz shell. Successive versions depicted its deterioration and along with other works made vivid the effect of increased carbon dioxide on ocean life. All in all, a surprisingly persuasive fusion of visual elegance and pointed commentary.

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