

Brinkwire

Psychologically Charged Installations at San Diego Museum of Art Explore Terrorism, Power

The San Diego Museum of Art opened on Saturday a psychologically challenging exhibition of installation art that explores themes of terrorism, freedom of speech, artificial intelligence and the abuse of power.

It's the first exhibition in the United States by Tim Shaw, a Northern Irish sculptor who draws on his experiences during the "The Troubles," the deadly civil conflict of the 1970s.

"Tim Shaw: Beyond Reason" features six large-scale, multi-sensory installations. In one, a female figure, tarred and feathered for supporting the British authorities, is tied to a lamppost. In another, trays fly and people flee after a bomb explodes in a Belfast cafeteria. In a third, a man and woman with loudspeakers face each other and rock on skis.

"We're living in dangerous times," said Shaw at a pre-opening reception on Thursday. "I hope that this work highlights that fact."

He said his goal is to inspire people to work for change, noting that "every individual has a responsibility to put something back into society."

The exhibition is unlike any contemporary show the museum has previously presented.

Director Roxana Velásquez said that while many exhibitions at the Balboa Park institution are "aesthetically pleasing," with this exhibition "we celebrate art that awakens us and shakes us to our core."

Taffin Ray, president of the board of trustees, said that in the 10 years she has been involved with the museum, Shaw's work is "the first exhibition that truly focuses on difficult, challenging, serious, important, universal issues of the time."

Velásquez said Shaw has been in San Diego for the past four weeks to help set up the complex installations.

Born in Belfast in 1964, Shaw currently lives in rural Cornwall in England. He was elected to The Royal Academy of Arts, London, in 2013 and made a Fellow of The Royal British Society of Sculptors the same year.

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