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New MOCA exhibit reinterprets the classics

BY STACY NICK

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Visitors to the Fort Collins Museum of Contemporary Art, or FCMOCA, can see some of their favorite paintings by Monet, Rembrandt, Caravaggio and Michelangelo. Well, sort of.

The museum's latest exhibit "The Masters ReMastered" explores historically revered art that has been re-envisioned.

"'The Masters ReMastered' explores how contemporary visual artists appropriate images from art history and use those images to make a new, contemporary statement," said Marianne Lorenz, FCMOCA executive director, in a news release. "And the outcomes of that process can be profoundly beautiful, satirical or funny.

"Each artist makes a very unique statement even as they quote from the work of previous painters or sculptors," she said.

But that statement is for the viewer to decipher, said Berthoud artist Wes Hempel, who has several works in the show, including one with his partner, fellow artist Jack Balas.

"(Explaining) what it is we're trying to say is something we would both run from," Hempel said. "We don't want to impose our viewpoint on the viewer."

That said, Hempel, whose painting "Call," which is based on a Maxwell Parrish illustration and replaces the female standing on a ledge with a male, said they are looking for specific conceptual and visual aspects.

"When you're working with dual figures there is a conceptual give and take," said Hempel, who bases his works on historical images and then hands the work over to Balas, who adds a contemporary image. In their work "Song of Birds 6," Hempel re-envisioned on John Singleton-Copley's study, "Head of a Negro."

The work is part of a series of similar paintings, inspired by a morning spent listening to the birds, said Balas, who added a contemporary figure of a man in a baseball cap sitting atop the original figure's head with bird droppings running down his face.

"I think people will see a conceptual give and take," said Hempel, who has been reworking the classics since he began painting.

"From the very beginning as I was teaching myself to paint, I would copy old master paintings," he said. "But I was never satisfied with a straight, faithful rendition; I would add to it and revise it."

In addition to painters, "The Masters ReMastered" exhibit features a number of Russian émigré artists, as well as those who focus on digitally manipulated photographs, which demonstrate how these artists update images from the past to make statements about the environment, land use and other contemporary issues, Lorenz said.

"We are particularly pleased to be presenting a number of paintings by the Israel-born, New

York-based artist Yigal Ozeri from the collection of Dr. Wayne Yakes," she said. Ozeri's paintings feature disembodied dresses that once were inhabited by members of the court of Charles the Second of Spain.

Ozeri's process of reduction, abstraction and virtuoso brushwork make these recreations of Alonso Coello's court portraits hauntingly beautiful, yet very contemporary, works of art, Lorenz said.

Additional Facts

'The Masters ReMastered'

When: Friday through Oct. 24; museum hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Fridays and noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays

Where: Fort Collins Museum of Contemporary Art, 201 S. College Ave.

Cost: \$5/\$2 for seniors; free for FCMOCA members, students and children

Information: 482-2787 or www.fcmoa.org.

Artist Yigal Ozeri will be speaking at a special Members-Only Preview at 6 p.m. Thursday, July 30 at the museum.
