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**Precariousness is theme of ‘Balancing Act’ exhibit**

“Balancing Act,” the title of David Middlebrook’s exhibit in Sacramento State’s Library Gallery, is an appropriate description of the works themselves and the meaning behind them.

The show runs Sept. 7-Dec. 15 at Sacramento State’s Library Gallery. Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday with a reception from 5-8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 7.

Middlebrook works with stone, metal and other materials to create pieces that give the illusion of being precariously balanced, sometimes defying gravity.

Writer David Roth describes Middlebrook as a “surrealist-leaning naturalist,” which the artist says is appropriate. “I’m a poet. I’m a construction guy. I’m an illusionist,” Middlebrook says. “I figure out ways to make things to fool the eye. Many of my works are describing physical events that could not happen in real time but stimulate the imagination to ask, ‘What if?’ ”

Though many of the works appear to be harmless pieces of eye-catching entertainment, what's behind them can be confrontational.

“Congress” is composed of two large pipes connected at the bowls – a critique of opponents who blow smoke up each other’s behind.

Many of his works deal with the impact of people on nature. “We displace animals on a constant basis,” Middlebrook says. “We force nature to take other courses, and it can throw the whole system off balance. At the core of my work is the need to express my passion for the world we are leaving our children.”

Another description the artist is fond of is “thing maker.” Middlebrook says that came from a young boy who was at one of his exhibits at a park in Milwaukee. The boy asked him if he had made “that thing,” to which Middlebrook told him he had. “You must be a thing maker,” the boy said. “When I grow up, I want to be a thing maker.”

Middlebrook acknowledges that “sculptor” is too broad a term to define his efforts. “The reality is, I make things.”

The encounter was also an emotional one for him. The child was from a lower economic area and the work had made an impression on the boy. “That really meant a lot to me,” Middlebrook says.
For more information on the exhibit, visit www.al.csus.edu/sota/ulg or call (916) 278-4189. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156.

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