While audiences were first introduced to the story of the young woman who falls for a beast in Gabrielle-Suzanne Barbot de Villeneuve’s story La belle et la bête, published in 1740, it is Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont’s 1756 abridged version that is most commonly known. So familiar is it that nearly half of de Beaumont’s 1756 abridged version that is most familiarly and large-scale full color paintings. Pitcher’s ceramic surfers, beach dogs, palm trees, and birds may have been inspired by ancient Greece, but from another angle they appear to have sprung from the punks of Venice Beach. Of course this is far from Pitcher’s first foray in a Dogtown-adherent direction e.g., the high-contrast black-and-white label he designed for Mr. Zoog’s Sex Wax.

“Heaps of Trouble” by Nancy Gifford

Inscrutable ink portraits of author John Fowles spread across the Arts Fund’s Gail Berkus wall in Karl Petrunak’s Daniel Martin project. Stuck without a studio to work in, the artist took a discarded copy of Fowles’s novel and drew his face over and over on its pages from memory. Like a book read on a strange journey, the work is somehow at once eerie and comforting. Across the space and around the door, Linda Daniels has pinned hand-cut colored film to a wall drawing in a sidelong, Lewitt-flavored homage to Matisse. George Sanders commands the new-media niche to the right of the entrance with an elegant projection describing plans he once made for works that don’t exist. The words flash on the gallery wall in white letters, the font growing and shrinking like some lunatic optician’s chart.

While all the artists in the show reveal something sharp about their practice, Richard Ross applies the most pressure to his edge. He attributes the images on view to his father, an amateur photographer and admirer of the unclothed female form. Nearby, Nancy Gifford alludes to another set of “Crazy Times” with a large rear-view portrait of a faceless male, his back cisscrossed with the straps of a straightjacket and his briskly hair a dense and tactile forest of graphite strokes. It’s unsettling, and adds a dimension of human physicality to the more cerebral smaller works by Gifford on display in the gallery’s oppo site corner. Taken together, these complex and intricately interrelated images, inspired in part by Leonard Cohen’s final admonition to “Make It Darker,” constitute a heartfelt artistic response to the hard political times that are upon us. As one of Gifford’s titles has it, we are looking at “Heaps of Trouble.”

But that doesn’t mean we won’t make it through, and no one expresses that hope more fully — or more ruefully — than Maria Rendon. Her diptych painting on vellum is part of a series called “Two by Two,” and like the creatures on board Noah’s Ark, these lucky refugees shine from within with a life and a hope of their own.

— Charles Donelan

**UCSB ARTS & LECTURES 2017-18 SEASON**

Arts & Lectures (A&L) likes to start things off with a rush, and 2017-18 will be no exception. In the first 10 days of programming alone, audiences will get a chance to see six spectacular performances: Lila Downs (Sep. 27), Lang Lang (Oct. 1), Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (Oct. 3), and Bill Murray (Oct. 6), as well as Cary Henry & The Funk Apostles (Oct. 4) and Samantha Bee (Oct. 5). Each of these shows represents the opening of an individual series within the larger scope of A&L offerings. For example, Bee is part of the Talking Heads series, which will also include Ira Glass, Trevor Noah, and Mike Birbiglia. Bill Murray and Lang belong to the Marquee lineup, joining the Israel Philharmonic (Nov. 1), mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato (Apr. 15, 2018), and six-time Tony Award winner Audra McDonald (May 15, 2018) on that list.

On the lectures side, A&L will introduce a new series called Speaking with Pico, which the writer/moderator kicks off with novelist Zadie Smith (Oct. 11). Theater fans have a lot to look forward to, as well, with the West Coast debut of Michèle Anne De Mey and Jaco Van Dormael’s Charleroi Danses piece Kit & Kanye (Apr. 7-8, 2018). This innovative theater company from Brussels uses miniature sets and dancing fingers along with music and film to tell an emotionally charged story of love and loss. Later that month, the New York–based theater company Bedlam will arrive for a two-night stand, offering two separate programs: Greek Bernard Shaw’s Saint Joan (Apr. 19, 2018) and William Shakespeare’s Hamlet (Apr. 20, 2018). Jazz piano prodigy Joey Alexander, who made his Santa Barbara debut last year, returns with his trio (Apr. 20, 2018) and anchors a healthy dose of jazz that includes the Squirrel Nut Zippers (Mar. 1, 2018) and Arturo O’Farrill (May 17, 2018). The dance programming will be rich, with seven shows including everything from Balinese gamelan to French hip-hop. Studding the list of major companies are Pilobolus and the Mark Morris Dance Group, whose piece, Peppoland, celebrates the 30th anniversary of the Beatles’ Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band.

Finally, three special events that seem likely to provide the kind of spiritual uplift that all of us crave these days are the following: Bill Murray, who teams up with a chamber trio for an evening of classic American poetry and song (Oct. 6); former U.S. VP Joe Biden (Oct. 21); and perennial holiday favorite Pink Martini (Dec. 2). For the complete 2017-18 UCSB Arts & Lectures season, visit arts.artsandlectures.ucsb.edu.

— Charles Donelan