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Moseyed up to Benicia during the rain to see Joseph Mele's "Altitudinous" show, comprising mixed-media paintings, prints and sculptures, at Gallery 621, 621 First Street—like Oakland's Mercury 20, a well-run, professional co-op gallery. Mele's who describes himself as a "texture junkie," works intuitively and physically, with AbEx abandon, exploring materials, but also creating Cubist pictorial spaces with a rather meditative, Asian feel. Painter Pamela Dixon, staffing the gallery, stood next to one of her imaginative, humorous figurative paintings. Thru October 13. Nice, scenic town for a short getaway—offering, with Arts Benicia and the Plein-Air Gallery, a real art scene off the beaten track. Interesting architecture, too, of course, some dating from Benicia's year as state capital in 1853–4.



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