Ceramic ‘farmers market’ on display

Part of open house at Cabrillo

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APTOS — At the recent California Conference for the Advancement of Ceramic Art, held annually in Davis, Cabrillo College students set up a farmers market, complete with bell peppers, mushrooms, strawberries and other fruits and vegetables.

But when patrons walked up to the market and picked up produce they wanted to buy, they found them to be solid and lacking in any sort of aroma.

These “fruits and vegetables” were, in fact, ceramic sculptures.

Students in instructor Gail Ritchie’s intermediate ceramics class at Cabrillo worked over a three-month period to sculpt, glaze and exhibit the large, realistic display, which covers five tables.

“It just totally fooled them,” Ritchie said of those who first encountered the exhibit in Davis. “All we got was smiles.”

Those locally will get a chance to see the display today from 5-8 p.m. when Cabrillo College’s Visual, Applied and Performing Arts Department holds an open house, featuring student work across all types of media.

The display, called “Just Add Water,” was inspired by Cabrillo’s weekly on-campus farmers market, Ritchie said.

Students made plaster molds from real or sculpted objects, then used clay slip to cast them. Other items were press molded, sculpted, or thrown and altered.

Not only did the students learn new ceramic techniques, but they also learned what it takes to set up an art exhibit, Ritchie said.

“This gives students the opportunity to actually learn what it takes to put on an exhibit,” she said. “It’s another educational opportunity.”

“Just Add Water” continues a yearly tradition the Cabrillo ceramics department has participated in since 2010. Each year, Cabrillo students in the Art 72 class create a large ceramic display to showcase at the Davis conference. Past years’ projects included a rock arch and a ceramic yard sale.

The California Conference for the Advancement of Ceramic Art is held in Davis where banks, warehouses and storefronts are transformed into temporary galleries for more than 40 colleges and universities to exhibit student ceramic sculpture. The conference consists of three days filled with demonstrations and lectures by nationally known ceramic artists, among other activities.