

MidCoast Show Highlights the Bright and Whimsical

Written by Michael LoGuidice

Tuesday, 13 February 2001 18:00

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For a show in spring 1998, the artist statement of Cyndy Gilroy was heavy and serious. The statement is a bit more upbeat for her current show with Jeanne Tamisiea at the MidCoast Fine Arts Gallery, a reflection of the brightness of the work. "I am having more fun now than ever," she writes, "which shows in the vibrant colors and whimsical elements."

Gilroy has 17 works in colored glass in the show at the Iowa Welcome Center in LeClaire, Iowa, while Tamisiea has 29 watercolors and oil-crayon drawings. Once again, MidCoast has paired two artists with compatible styles; Gilroy's use of whimsy and myth is a good match for Tamisiea's colorful surrealism. An opening reception for the show will be held Friday, February 16.

Gilroy's work shows her passion and fun, full of light touches. Yet her work also seems to be integrating more mythical components. Her piece *Brigid's Fire* is an example of the change; the glass piece looks like a sword with breasts, the subject matter somewhat serious while the image creative and fresh.

The Shinkendo Wheel, on the other hand, is a purely spiritual work. It carries forward the sword motif of *Brigid's Fire*, but its colors and composition are elegant and well-crafted. The wheel is dominated by greens and reds in rich hues, and the use of those colors mutes any whimsy. The inclusion of the terms of Shinkendo – which might be dubbed by dilettantes as "Zen and the Art of Swordsmanship" – within red circles underscores a spiritual influence.

Gilroy also invokes the mythical in her work *Claddagh Wheel*, which uses elegant colors and appears to be based upon the story of that symbol's origins: A man who was taken into slavery and eventually offered his master's daughter and wealth instead chooses to return to his hometown and find his true love, giving her the ring now known as the *Claddagh Wheel*

It appears that Tamisiea, the other artist in this show, is a good listener. She seems to pick up

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on other artists' work and the environment around her. One of her pieces in this show is a painting of one Gilroy's glass works, *Between Two Mountains*. Most of Tamisiea's pieces are organic and surrealistic, but *Betw*
een Two Mountains
is a geometric work, and Gilroy seems to have influenced the painter.

Tamisiea has been an instructor of art for more than 12 years at Black Hawk College and is currently the acting lead instructor for the visual-arts department. Before teaching, she was involved in her own graphic-design business for more than 13 years.

Tamisiea's works evoke Salvador Dali's style. An example of this is *Resurrection*, featuring a cat's head being held by a thumb and index finger over a body of water. Shades of gray predominate this composition and are a stark contrast to the many brightly colored works in the show.

One of the more colorful compositions is *Have It Your Way*, in which some creatures are all hovering around white objects and a gold object. The subtitle on this piece is "greed," while other works carry labels such as "avarice," "lust," "envy," and "gluttony." This might suggest that Tamisiea is working on a Seven Deadly Sins series, and the pieces create a feeling almost like that of Lewis Carroll's Mad Hatter tea party.

Tamisiea's draftsmanship is strong, her compositions clean and professional, some of the works even looking like book illustrations. My favorites are the surreal compositions. But her work is too varied to pigeonhole overall.

Tamisiea is very accurate in describing her artistic style in her artist's statement: "Although I've tried to maintain a consistent style in my artwork, it fails me. Having various approaches, media, and styles to draw upon keeps me busily diverse in what I am doing. ... There are the many choices of imagery passing through my mind's eye that make it difficult to choose what to paint. I have a rather gluttonous attitude about art: I want to do it all!"

An opening reception for the two artists will be held Friday, February 16, from 7 to 9 p.m. The exhibit runs through March. Works in the show are priced from \$120 to \$855, with most in the \$300 range.