

Exhibit Showcases a Mature Hand

Written by Michael LoGuidice
Tuesday, 12 August 2003 18:00

Kathleen Van Hyfte says her work is in a stage of transition, but I don't agree. There is a strong cubist element that runs through most of the works currently on display in a two-person show at the MidCoast Fine Arts Gallery near LeClaire. Her use of blue and red predominates most of the pieces. Her choice of a pallet that is heavy on primary, as opposed to pastel, color is consistent in all her works, other than the *Snow Scene*. The subject matter is varied, but the style and artistic choices show a mature hand behind the brush.

Van Hyfte probably disagrees with my assessment, based on her artist statement: "Currently, my work is in a stage of flux, meaning that it is evolving, or at least I hope this is true, into a new and more cohesive composite. The paintings currently on exhibit are a mixture of experiments where I have delved into the realistic, stylized, and abstract portrayal of subject matter. Typically, I have never actually planned my paintings, and usually start the process by simply putting on thin layers of paint, and then look for something to strike my imagination. This ... does leave room for some wonderful things to occur."

Van Hyfte's prices are very reasonable. They range from a high of \$600 to as little as \$100 for some very well-executed acrylic paintings. One of my favorites, *Just Wondering*, quite clearly captures this emotion. It is priced at \$350 and seems to me to be a good value.

Deception reminds me of the Picasso in the Daley Center Plaza in Chicago. The cubist composition has depth and is restful with enough movement within the composition to hold your interest.

Japanese Garden is a stylistic departure from the rest of Kathleen's paintings; there are no cubist influences in this composition. The painting surface takes on a tapestry effect, while the hands and face are realistically rendered. There is no depth to the composition, but the bright colors form a pleasing pattern.

Van Hyfte has 25 acrylic paintings on display at the gallery, located in the Mississippi Valley Welcome Center, and they're paired with 24 sculptures by Tom Lytle, whose work has a definite style.

Lytle's work reminds me of the relics from an archeological dig. It has a rough exterior, and a dusty, dirty beauty that grows on you like the rust on the Core Ten steel, from which most of his sculptures are made.

His artist statement gives us some history from his viewpoint and the philosophy behind his work. "I take great pride and pleasure in being experienced in many aspects of painting, drawing, photography, computer graphics, printmaking, and, of course, sculpture. In 1987, I had an inspirational turn in my career and began devoting the majority of my time to sculpture. Though I still complete a great deal of figurative studies in oil sticks and pencils, I focus most of my finished work in three-dimensional mixed media and almost exclusively in welded steel and copper. My sculpture work predominately reflects the human figure in a stylized representative manner with an occasional shift toward realism or abstraction. My greatest challenge is the application of heart and hammer to transform cold, hard steel into a fluid, moving form."

Exhibit Showcases a Mature Hand

Written by Michael LoGuidice
Tuesday, 12 August 2003 18:00

The venue is very important when viewing Lytle's work, and this gallery is a challenging space for displaying three-dimensional sculpture. For example, the sculpture *Evolution* was displayed at the Quad City Arts Center and showed very well.

Evolution

is again in this show, but nestled among the painting-display cases, it does not have enough space to be viewed to its best advantage.

Death the Creator occupies a good spot in the gallery, well-suited to its size and scope. The sculpture has a major contrast between the rough, rusted, spine-like form perched on a steel box-tube base. I'm not sure I agree that Lytle uses the human figure unless one expands the definition of human form to include skeletal armatures.

This is a good show at the Welcome Center and worth the trip to LeClaire. Some of the prices on the paintings are at a very attractive level, especially if Van Hyfte continues to develop her art and reputation.