

South Broadway Cultural Center spotlights talented quartet in 'Desert Divinity'

By Wesley Pulkka / For The Journal
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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — Cinco de Mayo was in full bloom as I wandered into the South Broadway Cultural Center to view "Desert Divinity" featuring work by Kevin Comerford, Julie Reichert, Gabriel Luis Powers and Richard Hazel, curated by Augustine Romero.

Though the auditorium was filled with applauding people witnessing gorgeous dancers and listening to joyous music, the gallery was sublimely quiet and the art on the walls was beautifully impressive, calm and inviting.

If there is such a category as lyrical constructivism, Comerford has mastered the genre. His celebratory pastel and pure pigment hued paintings and three-dimensional constructions emblemize the architecture in architectonic compositional structure.

In works like "Exemplar" Comerford employs triangles and variable scale rectangles to create a visual syncopation that integrates interior and exterior spatial relationships. His sense of color and meticulous execution offer a high-quality experience for the viewer.

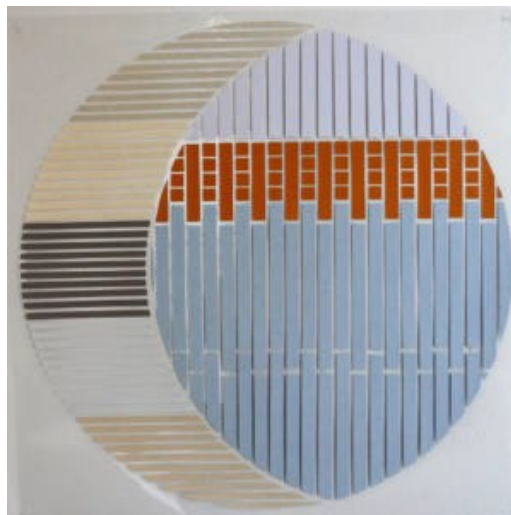
In "Cobertizo," a shed-like structure that reads as a covered balcony because of its placement on the wall, Comerford departs from the canvas to literally build the structure in three dimensions. He generally works with architectural elements to reveal human presence without having to include actual people.



"Exemplar" by Kevin J. Comerford incorporates triangles and variable-scale rectangles to create a syncopated juxtaposition of interior and exterior spatial relationships.

While viewing Comerford's "Cobertizo" one can imagine it filled with tiny people watching a performance. In a sense the viewer provides the performance while the audience, albeit invisible, is entertained by your gawking presence.

Jean Dubuffet used to paint little faces around the edges of his pictures so that they watched you watch the painting.



“Circle 10” by Julie Reichert beautifully depicts overlapping circles utilizing earth-tones and sky blue to animate the composition.

Reichert also is a talented and careful artist whose circular compositions of handmade colored paper on acetate are crisp, clean and stunning to behold.

Two of my favorites are “Circle 7” and “Circle 10.” In “Circle 7” Reichert examines the juxtaposition of vertical and horizontal lines to create an active field of light and color that is set in motion by small floating white dots along the division between vertical and horizontal lines. Black, blues and grays dominate, while a green ladder element on the right is the perfect break in her palette adding life to the whole.

In “Circle 10,” Reichert employs sky blue and earth tones to create a drop-dead gorgeous drama between overlapping circles and vertical versus horizontal bars of color. Her work captures light, exudes energy and pops the eye while retaining the aura of a meditative yantra – a visual-aid for Hindu meditation.

These are not your grandmother’s mandalas.

Powers is an explorative artist who pushes his layered compositions away from the surface while designing his compositions to make war on the rectilinear picture plane. In a sense he is the counterpoint to the calm created by the other three artists.

In “Jack Rabbit Speaks” Powers employs collage, airbrush and conventional brushwork to manifest a jazzy nocturnal pictorial that wants to jump off the wall into the viewer’s lap. Unlike his fellow exhibitors Powers offers a unique non-serial image in each piece.



“Dogs at Night” by Richard Hazel is an explosive composition of shattered blacks, whites and grays.

Hazel is an uber talented printmaker and sculptor who has mastered the band saw and several other woodworking tools to explore vase forms and interacting spirals.

His “Dogs at Night” and “Niagara 1” are my two favorite prints while “Spiral Ellipse” is my favorite among many others of his wood sculptures.

Hazel’s “Dogs at Night” is an explosion of black, white and gray shattered forms that could pass as a Pablo Picasso re-visitation of any number of “Rape of the Sabines” paintings.

I love the way that Hazel, who is the paragon of constraint in wood, can just cut loose in “Dogs at Night.”

Hazel’s canine rendition triggered a memory of rolling into Baltimore in the wee hours at the speed of a prowler car while observing a large dog pack saunter across the street. Glad my aging Plymouth didn’t falter, I eased by.

This is a wonderful do-not-miss exhibition.

If you go:

WHAT: “Desert Divinity,” with work by Kevin Comerford, Julie Reichert, Gabriel Luis Powers and Richard Hazel

WHEN: 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays through May 31. 848-1320.

WHERE: South Broadway Cultural Center, 1025 Broadway SE

HOW MUCH: Free