



Grandpa's Pride by Bonnie Fogg

SURFACE TREATMENT

The Hidalgo Watercolor Society Annual Exhibition

Where: UVAL, Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, 921 E 12th Street, Mission

When: Through Feb 3, 2018

Hours: 10am to 6pm Tuesday to Friday, 2-5pm Saturday

Contact: (956) 583-2787

Clarity of Vision

Embracing the empirical, watercolorists translate it into their visual language

BY NANCY MOYER

SPECIAL TO THE MONITOR

The Hidalgo Watercolor Society offers a strong exhibition this year with artists who have mastered the finer points of the watercolor medium, along with those who are still aspiring. On display at the Kika de la Garza Fine Arts Center, this is a large showing, manifesting memories of diverse parts of the United States by turning them into artworks. Traditional watercolor is notable for expressing realistic perceptions of the environment, and paintings in this exhibit do it especially well.

Many of the HWS members are winter Texans whose pleasure in being in South Texas during the blizzards up north seems to manifest enthusiasm through their paintings. Vocalizing this mood, Pete Krystiniak, HWS President and Exhibiting Artist commented, "The show is really great. I'm an airbrusher; I don't do a lot of watercolor, but I get to watch all these people doing this, and it makes me wish I was a watercolorist! Some of the people are so meticulous. Like I said, I wish I was more into that kind of stuff - they do some great work here." Could it be that there's a clarity in traditional watercolor that we are currently lacking in our daily contemporary lives? Because this show does feel good.

I noticed three interesting approaches to potentially lackluster genres done so well that they become exhilarating not only technically, but also through the image selection. Some artists went for exacting realistic effects, demonstrating precision in seeing, drawing skills, and remarkable watercolor control. Dee Tunseth's "Pears and Plumeria" and Bonnie Fogg's "The Majestic Ones" are photographically persuasive, which is usually not a watercolor characteristic. While still realists, some watercolorists transfer their emotional reaction to the scene into their compositions. Mary Wainwright's "Gate View – Lake Fork of the Gunnison" could be your standard American scenic view if not for the unexpected shadow. The inclusion of this vast and perfect shadow brings the viewer into the temporal reality of the subject. "Night Sky" by Maureen Dodge strikes a magical chord with its brilliant light behind the mountains abutting a still star-filled sky. Tunseth's "Red Umbrellas" shares this same mystical-magical feeling; pieces of a bright sky turn trees from a blue-green hue into orange as outdoor patio umbrellas glow beneath. Dodge, Freddie Harmon, and Anne Glatt, allowed the artistic vision to politely supersede the empirical one. Harmon's "Succulent" overjoys with surprising colors, "Night Beauty" by Glatt brings the flowers to life with its color patterns, and in "Sedona", Dodge views the landscape as horizontal bands of color sometimes shifting into diagonals as she moves us up into a vertical outcropping. "If there's a depth to the scene, I try to get into it – up the hill, that sort of thing," explained Dodge about her perception. "Following with your eye what actually is there."

The show reflects the travels, home bases, and personal interests of the HWS members. In places the exhibit reads like a travelogue, such as the group of small and simple scenes reminiscent of postcards. And there's always the bird paintings. Tip to novice watercolorists: birds are not your friends. HWS operates under the auspices of the Upper Valley Art League which is a membership-based nonprofit arts organization dedicated to teaching, preserving and inspiring the arts in the RGV.

Nancy Moyer, Professor Emerita of Art, UTRGV, is an art critic for The Monitor. She may be reached at nmoyer@rgv.rr.com