

What is your state of being? Really

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Stefan Hard / Staff Photo Works, from left, by artists Meg Cox of Burlington, Glen Coburn Hutcheson of Montpelier, Ted Ceraldi of Craftsbury and Ashlee Rubinstein of Burlington are among those on display on the main floor of SPA.

In our modern world, there is much reflection — perhaps navel gazing — about how we are all faring. We share with people in the grocery store line and at our Facebook page. But as Studio Place Arts Director Sue Higby noted, “It’s probably the case that people already know. A simple tilt of the head or gesture is revealing.”

Enter the main floor gallery at SPA in Barre for the new main floor exhibit, “State of Beings,” on view through Aug. 30, and you will see realistic and fantastical beings in a variety of media, and in addition, their varying responses to the world around them. Agitation, curiosity, ecstasy, irascibility and serenity all tug at the corners of the lips and eyes of this unusual community of beings; some emotions are ephemeral, while others appear to be in a more permanent state.

Take the enormous, five-foot tall painting by Burlington artist Ashlee Rubinstein titled “Mom,” for example. Mom has an unmistakable stern presence, sitting in front of overbearing, scarlet flecked wallpaper. Clearly, this is a portrait of a mother who waited up all night for her child to return safely; her concern is overshadowed by her annoyance about the inconvenience of it all.

Nearby, a sleekly graceful, geometrical abstraction titled “Tango” by Ted Ceraldi of Craftsbury, hewn from a block of black walnut, depicts the fluid grace of a couple enmeshed physically and emotionally as they dance through their lives as one.

A cardboard construction of two enormous nude women lumbers nearby on the floor. Meg Cox of Burlington created this sculpture, which occupies a five-foot cube of space. One woman holds the other above her crouched body while her pendulous breasts swing to the ground. The smaller figure gains strength from the other as she reaches, questioningly, with arms outstretched skyward.

At the front of the gallery, an effervescent and athletic nude dancer moves across a large canvas and two blue jays fly away rapidly. Artist Julia San Roman of Groton reveals how boundless joy can be so brief and fleeting. Her paint strokes imply the spontaneity of the figure's energy.

Viewers wishing to experiment with an exceptionally powerful persona may merely step behind the elaborate, mica-encrusted mask of "Coatlque, Mother Goddess of the Aztecs," created by Carolyn Enz Hack of Thetford. (Viewers are encouraged to photograph themselves behind the mask of this commanding entity.)

Upstairs, Montpelier painter Ray Brown is exhibiting five distinct series of new paintings. Brown's use of rich oil paint colors and bold brush strokes is engaging in these abstract compositions. A series of six works, "Newcomb's Forge," reflects on his fascination with sculptor Lynn Newcomb's workplace; these works light the walls with fire reds, oranges and smoke tones. Another series of six geometrically abstract paintings, "Umbria Remembered," references Italian villages built around a plaza or square.

Also upstairs is a group of nature inspired mono-prints using various plant leaves, blades of grass, and hemp twines in an ambitious collaborative printmaking project by local printmakers Sabrina Fadiel of Barre and Phillip Robertson of Hardwick.

Studio Place Arts

Studio Place Arts presents "State of Beings," through Aug. 30, at SPA, 201 N. Main St. in Barre. On the second floor is printmaking by Phillip Robertson and Sabrina Fadiel; "Paintings in Series" by Ray Brown is on the third floor. Summer hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday-Friday; noon to 4 p.m. Saturday; call 802-479-7069, or go online to www.studioplacarts.com. A public reception will be held today, 6 to 8 p.m.