

Black and White at Studio Place Arts

By Mary Gow

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Stefan Hard / Staff Photo

Works by various artists populate the main floor of SPA for the gallery's "It's Black and White" show.

Sometimes we have too much gray, including the gray of this spring's interminably cloudy weather. Fortunately, Studio Place Arts in Barre has a perfect antidote — two actually.

It's Black & White, a bold, high-contrast exhibition in SPA's Main Floor Gallery, features paintings, drawings, sculptures, and photographs. While there's nary a color there, the Third Floor Gallery is bursting with it, and with texture, too, in Tangents: Fiber Diversified, a show of innovative textile art.

The two shows opened last week and continue to May 31. Both are celebrated at the upcoming annual B.A.S.H — the Big Artsy SPA Happening on Friday, May 9. The B.A.S.H., a benefit for SPA programs, includes music, food, and silent auction of artwork.

It's Black and White is an unusually large show for SPA, with about 50 pieces, by 30 artists. The artists are almost all from central and northern Vermont.

"The stark beauty and dynamic energy of opposites makes for great art. While there is formality associated with black and white, consider both traditional media and non-traditional media use ... Think bold (not nostalgic) use of black and white," read part of SPA's call to artists for this show. The theme drew a robust response.

"'Black and White' gets you to focus in on line, layer, and composition without having the

confusing aspect of color entering in,” said SPA Executive Director Sue Higby. “Those are qualities of the work that are really strong.”

The works are far-ranging — Op Art, sculptures, collages, paintings, drawings, photographs, even little K-Cup assemblages. There’s tension and energy in all that black and white, light and dark, positive and negative.

In the Op Art corner of the gallery, a classic piece accompanies recent works. In a 1959 Rapidograph and ink drawing by John Douglas of Burlington, little black triangles on a white field warp and compress, giving the illusion that the surface curves down to intersecting folds. Douglas’s original is owned by Harvard University and was used for the cover of a dedication brochure for the Corbusier Art Center in 1962, he is showing a photograph of the original at SPA.

Michael Heffernan’s “Wrapped Cinnamon Roll,” 2009, has its own optical twists. A cinnamon roll in a black and white checked wrapper, sits on a smoothed matching black and white checked paper. The shape of the roll and a swirl of its icing seem to rise out of the checker board.

In “Eleusis Revisited,” a pantaptych — a five paneled piece — in acrylic, charcoal, and India ink, Rob Towne of South Hero, connected with mythology. The Persephone myth, images from classical works and body casts from Pompeii all influenced him.

“For this work, banishing color from the palette proved a very liberating experience. I felt I was able to fully explore an expressive range of line, tone, and value without the added (and sometimes vexing) complications of color. The use of a stark palette led inevitably to a stark theme: The Living and The Dead,” explained Towne in his artist’s statement.

“It’s Black and White” offers many compelling pieces. Michael Smith of Underhill who often paints in vibrant lime greens, hot pinks, brilliant yellows and purples switched to whiteout fluid for his thought-provokingly witty “Trigger Fish.” “T Shirt by Day,” by Frederick Rudi of Marshfield has a classical feeling that elevates its ordinary but intimate subject. “Owl Boxes” by Sharon Galligan of Calais make K-cups more fun — and possibly relate coffee drinkers with these avian subjects.

“Tangents: Fiber Diversified,” in SPA’s Third Floor Gallery includes works by fourteen Vermont members of the Surface Design Association, an international organization dedicated to textile arts. Here, color and texture abound. These artists work with their media in traditional and innovative ways — coiling, felting, painting, embroidering, laminating, dying, stripping, knitting, quilting, and on and on.

Eve Jacobs Carnahan of Montpelier often explores our relationship with the earth in her artwork. With handspun wool in shades of green, her knitted plant “Knotweed: Not Safe,” offers a different look at this alien invasive.

Barbara Sherrington of East Calais created the elegant “Photo Album Ball Gown.” Small photographs printed on fabric and painted with gouache fill the bodice.

Almuth Palinkas of Barre has two pieces in the show, “Play of Light” and “Sylt.” With silk, cotton and metallic thread, her colors are radiant.

After this long gray spring, radiant colors are so very welcome.

INFO:

Studio Place Arts
201 North Main St., Barre, VT 05641
802-479-7069

Main Floor Gallery

It's Black and White – An exhibit that reveals the stark beauty and dynamic energy of opposites.

Second Floor Gallery

2014 Silent Auction Exhibition – Open through May 9 (bidding starts Apr. 15)

Third Floor Gallery

Tangents: Fiber Diversified by 14 Vermont members of the Surface Design Association – an exhibit of innovative textile art.

Exhibit Dates: April 15 - May 31, 2014

Two Events:

Sat., Apr. 26, 3-4 p.m. - Talks by exhibiting artists in Tangents: Fiber Diversified

Friday, May 9, 7-9 p.m.

B.A.S.H. - Big Arty SPA Happening

A benefit for SPA art programs that includes great art, music, silent auction& eats. Enjoy art rock band, Swale (main floor), and blues & folk musician Andy Pitt (upstairs). Wines served by the Grand View Winery (cash bar). Black & white desserts created by students at the Barre Technical Center Bake Shop.

Tickets: \$20 advance/\$25 day of event

Call for tickets: 479-7069