

‘Now You See It’: Illusions explore perceptions at SPA

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By Mary Gow Arts Correspondent



Carleen Zimbalatti: “On the Square #13”, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff photo

Brown, green, black and a splash of yellow flow across the upper left corner of the canvas in the front window of Studio Place Arts. A bright tropical palette of blue, green, orange and bursts of red cavort through the lower right. These two fluid blasts of color are only at the corners, each extending into the canvas a couple of inches and ending at a crisp line — appearing as sections of border on an otherwise white canvas.

“Dancing the Corners” by Frederick Rudi, of Marshfield, is a perfect introduction to the exhibition “Now You See It” at the Barre gallery. “Now You See It” plays with perception of space. The show features work of 19 artists in painting, sculpture and more in diverse media including found objects and fluorescent and LED lights.

“Vibrations: Dance of Color and Forms,” a beautiful solo exhibition of abstract paintings on canvas and silk by Maggie Neale, fills SPA’s Third Floor Gallery. Neale’s selections, from work done during the past two decades, many recently revisited, vibrantly converse with each other. Groups of her work have compelling dialogues — between the dyed silks and canvases, between the forms and colors of the canvases.

SPA’s annual Silent Auction, with all donated artwork and proceeds benefiting SPA programming, fills the Second Floor Gallery (and the Morse Block Deli).



Matthew J. Peake: “Outside The Box: Attitude-Hopeless Reassurance”, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff photo



Maggie Neale: “Wind”, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff photo

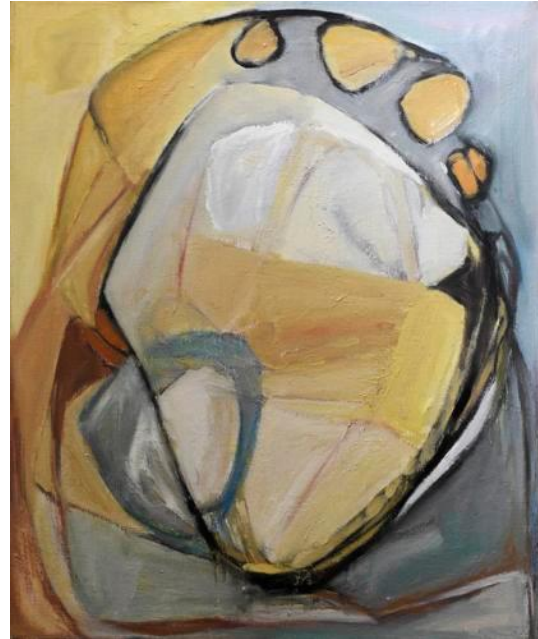
Eye-popping pieces that seem to vibrate before your eyes; shape-shifting ones — are you looking at the outside corner or inside corner, fragile thread constructions, works that draw you into their layers; bars of light that seem to go on forever, “Now You See It” offers illusion and opportunities to explore perception.

“There is a variety of artwork that plays with your perceptions,” explains Sue Higby, SPA’s executive director. “Part of your perceptions may be the way you see things. Lighting and mirrors are tricks to the eye that might turn up. But part of what you might perceive pertains to the narrative around the piece.

“Sometimes people see what they want to see or are accustomed to seeing, so there are moments in the gallery that might have one or the other or a combination of different kinds of perceptual tricks,” Higby said.



Robert Fahey: “In Or Out You Decide”, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff photo



Maggie Neale: “Outcome”, Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff photo

Walk into the gallery and “Crystal Ship,” and “Brita the Mantis Shrimp” by Bruce Hasse, of Charlotte, are in constant movement overhead. Chunks of wood, wire, solar looking fins, curved tubes, a ball of blue line, bits of metal, sail-like lenses — the pieces spin and bob, shifting their shapes in their aerial acrobatics. Tracking their multiple movements can be dizzying and delightful as unexpected pieces float through their complex revolutions.

In the oil painting “Reflections Underground,” Ann Young, of Barton, takes viewers to urban mass transit. A woman, the artist perhaps, stands looking over her camera — we’re seeing her reflection on a train or station window. Among the scene’s layers, the Court Street station view is reflected in her camera’s lens.

Stephen Rhoades, of Essex Junction, and Chris Jeffrey, of Montpelier, transport viewers with light. Look inside the open end of Jeffrey’s “Untitled” box with fluorescent rods and mirrors and the bars of light seem to go on forever — not just the limited depth

of the box. Rhoades' "Window into Infinity" with LED lights and concave mirrors baffles the eye with perceived movement.

In "Carry Me," Lars Hasselblad Torres, of Montpelier, builds up layers of clippings and bits of newspaper underlying paint. Figures emerge and words in familiar typeface reading "If you see me, carry me."

Adjacent to Torres' piece are a breathtakingly delicate thread sculpture "Anitya" by Tuyen My Nguyen and Carleen Zimbalatti's "Mapping Geometry" with hand-dyed cord on birch panel. The two pieces are both in yellow and blue, recalling the colors of Ukraine.



Tuyen My Nguyen: "Anitya", Jeb Wallace-Brodeur / Staff photo

Along with "Mapping Geography," Zimbalatti has three other pieces in the exhibition, all rooted in her focus on the line. "Continuum" immerses the viewer in its pattern with its lines repeated across the large format panel as the color from pale yellow through blue, green and black.

A fleeting serendipitous bonus in “Now You See It” — the early afternoon sun these days passes through the SPA front window at just the right angle to project a shadow of the center’s name onto the center of Rudi’s “Dancing at the Corners.” Check it out around 1 p.m.

Upstairs at SPA, the Third Floor Gallery bursts with color and movement in Maggie Neale’s “Vibrations: Dance of Color and Form.”

“Vibrations happen when one color edges into another or when one form twists into another form. Vibrations are energy, which can lift us up, make us dance, sing and look beyond the current moment into the next. I feel this vibrational quality as I paint,” says Neale in her artist’s statement.

Neale, who has a studio at SPA, selected her work for the show with an eye toward transforming the space and making the exhibition about more than the individual pieces — and brilliantly succeeded. Her elegant long silks are luminous and bring actual physical movement along with color interactions to the conversations.

“My paintings on canvas and silk are color musings, the inner dance brought forth alive onto the surface for others to view. Using densely mixed tones with surprising harmonies, I let calligraphic lines form energized abstracted shapes,” Neale explains.

Neale often incorporates bits of textiles in her pieces, using a cold wax process. Her sensitive choices add texture and depth as with a bit of lace tablecloth in “Standing Tall” with its orange and green forms with a vertical gray column, perhaps Ionic. In “Tatters and Grief,” ripped coarsely woven cloth amplifies the painting’s sense of loss. In “Summer of Nostalgia,” a bit of gauze complements the piece’s gentleness.

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Studio Place Arts

Studio Place Arts presents “Now You See It,” through June 25, Main Floor Gallery; Silent Auction to benefit SPA programs (concludes noon Friday, June 17), Second Floor Gallery; “Variations: Dance of Color and Form,” paintings by Maggie Neale, Third Floor Gallery, SPA, 201 N. Main St. in Barre. Hours are: 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday-Friday; 11:30 to 4 p.m. Saturday, and by appointment; call 802-479-7069, or go online to www.studioplacearts.com