

Artist's work marked by rich, saturated colors

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“High in the Aspens” by Cami Thompson is an 18x18 oil on mounted linen and will be included in an exhibit opening Saturday at the Taos Art Museum at Fechin House. (Courtesy of Taos Art Museum)

Cami Thompson’s work is marked by rich, saturated colors with a light that seems to shine out from beneath the oils themselves.

But if folks around Taos think of her only as the lady who paints dahlias, they’ll have a surprise when they see the breadth of work from the Questa-area artist at a new exhibition, “Love, Light and the Pursuit of Art,” at the Taos Art Museum at Fechin House.

“This show is giving me the opportunity to show what I can do,” she said in a telephone interview. “I’m always changing.” But the change comes with a preservation of her own style, Thompson added.

While she has painted brilliantly colored dahlias from her own garden, her subjects include people, seascapes, animals, mountains, landscapes and more.

Museum Director Susan Fisher said, while this exhibit was on the calendar before she came on the scene, she thinks it’s important to honor the work of long-time, Taos-area artists and “to continue the story of artists whose work comprises this heritage.”

Getting the more contemporary view of Thompson’s art is a nice follow-up to the museum’s previous exhibit on the art of Nicolai Fechin, she added.

Thompson’s work brings “very saturated color, a very broad sense of composition so there is not one focal point supported by background, but a modern sense of a very diffuse composition across the entire canvas,” Fisher said. “Representational art is very strong across the American Southwest, but it is interpreted in such a variety of ways.”

And it’s clear, she added, that the intention was to show the breadth of the artist’s work. Thompson isn’t just the “dahlia lady.”

“I never grew dahlias before I came here,” said Thompson, who moved to New Mexico in 2001.

For four summers, she taught painting in Alaska and captured scenes from that northernmost state.

Her earlier years in Michigan and Colorado also gave her a variety of scenes to contemplate.

And, if you look at the early work on her website, camithompsonartist.com, you’ll even see some images that draw on the cubist and impressionist styles.

But early on, Thompson said she made a crucial decision about the direction her work would take.

“Back in the ’60s, you’d be painting the bad day you’re having ... c’mon. If you want to make a living painting,



“Dahlia Emory Paul” is a 30x15 oil on canvas by Cami Thompson. Although she has painted a number of dahlias from her Questa-area home, Thompson’s work features a number of other subjects. (Courtesy of Taos Art Museum)

If you go

WHAT: “Cami Thompson: Love, Light, and the Pursuit of Art”



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and I did, you have to paint something beautiful, something pleasing, something you'd want to hang on the wall in your home," she said.

Thompson said she was pleased with a comment a new neighbor made about her work: "Your work has such a dreamlike quality to it ... it's realistic, but it's not."

Many of the images she paints are captured out-of-doors.

Actually, the fact that this exhibit is at Fechin House holds special resonance for her because Thompson met Joseph Nordman, a student of Nicolai Fechin, in 1988 when Eya Fechin still lived at the house and beckoned Thompson inside to meet him.



"Hollyhocks" is an 8x16 oil on mounted linen by northern New Mexico painter Cami Thompson. (Courtesy of Taos Art Museum)

"I'm most excited when I work with colors I'm able to obtain with no turpentine or paint thinner," said Thompson, who started getting sick from the fumes of her materials in the 1990s and converted to non-toxic substances. "When you come into my studio, there's no smell."

WHEN: Opening Saturday, on exhibit through Dec. 4

WHERE: Taos Art Museum at Fechin House, 227 Paseo del Pueblo Norte, Taos

MORE INFO: 575-758-2690, taosartmuseum.org

Nordman, Thompson said, introduced her to plein air painting, telling her if she would give him a place to stay at her home near Aspen, and gather some others who wanted to learn and would pay \$10 each, he would teach them the technique.

"I learned a lot from him," Thompson said, adding that she's still in touch with the 94-year-old artist. "I've been painting outside ever since."

And, oh yes, there certainly are problems with bugs and dust, and other such things that come with the outdoors and may end up mashed in your oils.

"I take out the tweezers and pick it out," she said.

But she contends that only the experience of painting outdoors – you have to dash something off in an hour and a half or the light changes too much – allows you to truly capture the feeling of the subject.

"You can't get the feeling without experiencing it," Thompson said.

Many of the paintings then are completed in the studio, she added.



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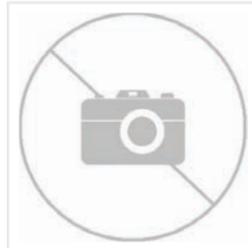
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