

ENTERTAINMENT

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Artist wears her heart on her sleeve

Wyomissing resident Deb Schlouch paints what she thinks, experiences and feels. Many of her heartfelt works are on display at the Grandview Gallery of Wilson School District through Sunday.

By Ron Schira

Reading Eagle Correspondent

Some artists just can't help themselves. They wear their hearts literally on their sleeve. They live in a world that they absolutely must speak to — and in any way they can.

They need to tell you what they are thinking, what they are feeling and what they are experiencing personally, emotionally, intellectually and even spiritually, if possible. They have an unrequited need to relate or mitigate their lives through art, no matter what the art form or how it is accepted.

One such artist is Wyomissing resident Deb Schlouch, who paints her life through heartfelt renditions of interpersonal relationships, staggering doubts and fears, philosophical meanderings and spiritually oriented abstraction.

A massive collection of work for her first solo exhibit in the area, some 80 paintings are on display through Sunday in the newly opened Grandview Gallery of Wilson School District. This show, entitled "Welcome to My World," comprises about six years worth of work.

At times anguished and at other times elated, the artist realizes an impromptu style of just throwing down the bones without much forethought while relying on intuition and an innate sense of color. Her urgency to expel whatever demon (or angel) from her gut takes priority over anything that may inhibit her spontaneity and thereby squelch the emotional impact of the work.

In this manner she has something in common with the well-known Trans-Avantgarde Italians such as Enzo Cucchi or Francesco Clemente. Like them she brings the subject matter close up, right in your face, to be precise, and expresses her feelings through style more than technique. Notwithstanding her later abstractions, most of what she does occurs on a field of dynamic painterly color. Everything is bright, undiluted and frontal.

The earlier works deal almost entirely with relationships. In one, depictions of



Deb Schlouch's acrylic on canvas painting "Water Beads: Nova Animus (new breath)."

her mother and herself literally lock horns over a crown sitting on a pillow between them. Another shows a giant self portrait where horse blinders block the artist's vision, and in yet another a woman with golden eyes stares blankly into the viewer's space with her mouth stitched shut, a huge Valentine's heart next to her crossed out like a correction.

Of course works such as these are therapeutic and do after a time mutate into different, more formal configurations. A few years ago the artist had taken up an Oriental martial art called qi gong. Somewhat like tai chi, qi gong requires one to perform a movement combined with a visualization technique. This technique would require the participant to

envision rolling imaginary beads of water inside the palms of their hands as a calming procedure.

Encouraged and moved by this, Schlouch was inspired to paint a series of "Water Bead" paintings; whereas the artist would insert circle within circle, or bubble, or drop, or swirl and eddy within the confines of the canvas and have it symbolize her newfound sense of meaning, peacefulness and emotional control over life and art.

A large five-foot square acrylic on canvas called "Water Beads: Nova Animus (new breath)" epitomizes this to the extreme. One can see the physicality and the motion of her dance with art as she posits one circular shape after another on

top of a vibrant cobalt blue background.

A number of prints as well as two-sided banners and a large free standing painted assemblage are also part of the show.

Regardless of some of the serious content inhabiting a few of these works, there is an undercurrent of redemption and positivity coupled with a desire to make it right.

Doom and gloom does not fit into the overall equation as bright coloration and gestural lyricism transcend its drama. She wants you to know what she thinks, experiences, feels, but in the end she wants it to be good painting. And in the end, that's what it is.

■ Contact Ron Schira at entertainment@readingeagle.com.



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