

Artists at Kish Gallery in Columbia paint music in motion



April Rimpo's "Fluid" is part of the exhibit at the Bernice Kish Gallery at Slayton House in Columbia through June 8. (Courtesy photo / Chas Rimpo)

By **Mike Giuliano**

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April Rimpo and Elaine Weiner-Reed have distinct artistic styles, but their exhibit at the Bernice Kish Gallery at Slayton House, “Portraits of Life — The Art of Storytelling,” emphasizes their shared interest in making art that emphasizes movement.

Sometimes the movement is in music, sometimes it is in dance, and most often it's simply the way in which loose lines and flowing colors amount to a kind of visual music.

Making thematic connections between different art forms is at the heart of this show. Indeed, a couple of evening programs during the run of this exhibit involved live music and poetry readings; and there are printed poems hanging next to some of their exhibited artwork. As Weiner-Reed observes in an artist statement: "Listen to the art. Look at the music."

It seems appropriate that Rimpo's musical taste often favors jazz, because its improvisatory spirit makes it especially suitable for treatment in visual art.

Traditional jazz is showcased in Rimpo's watercolor "Showin' Off," in which a trumpet player and a trombone player with the New Orleans-based Preservation Hall Jazz Band command the stage with the confidence of veteran musicians; and two members of this same band also are featured in the nicely titled "Letting Loose."

Like musicians, artists often explore themes and variations within a given subject. For Rimpo, this includes varying the number of performers depicted within a given artwork. Besides the multiple players featured in some works, there are other pieces in which all of her attention is centered on a single player. In the watercolor "In Her Own World," a seated bass player seems totally immersed in practicing on her instrument.

Rimpo also has an interest in the audiences drawn to concerts. This is definitely the case in the acrylic painting “Traffic Jam at the Concert.” The crowd for an outdoor concert is shown walking down an aisle and wandering the grounds. Most of these people are seen from the side or behind, so the intention is not to give a detailed depiction of them as individuals. Instead, they are essentially defined by the brightly colored clothing that seems apt for a summer concert. This painting is representational, but its numerous spots of assertive color call your attention to the painting as a gathering of colorful forms.

A stylistic link between Rimpo’s representational depictions of the music scene and Weiner-Reed’s more abstractly conceived compositions is that both artists are concerned with movement as it pertains to musicians, dancers and people in general. There is a deliberate looseness in figuration and in the free-flowing colors used in the background.

By way of the mediums deployed, Rimpo occasionally uses fluid acrylic. Examples include the solo trumpet player depicted in “Follow Your Dreams”; and in “Heating Up,” the three performers on stage are backed by abstract washes of yellow, orange and red that reflect how jazz musicians can raise the emotional temperature of the room.

Another medium with flowing qualities, watercolor, is used by Rimpo for the aptly titled “Fluid,” which depicts seven female dancers.

Rimpo’s exhibited artwork deals overtly with musicians, dancers and even bicycle riders, and so her interest in movement is handled quite literally. Although Weiner-Reed is much less directly representational in her

approach, she does have several welded metal sculptural assemblages that are imaginary musical instruments. Typically, they resemble cubist treatments of instruments including a guitar.

Most of Weiner-Reed's exhibited artwork involves acrylic paintings in which abstracted human figures are conveyed in such a way that the viewer gets a sense of movement. In "Created in Music," for example, there are four human figures that are defined by nervously squiggled lines enclosing mostly white coloration. The purple background underscores the sense that this is an energy field occupied by a few people.

Weiner-Reed has numerous paintings in which she uses that approach to figuration. There typically are sections within a composition that are nearly a monochromatic white, as well as other sections that offer a more colorful contrast.

This is seen most dramatically in the acrylic painting "The Red Chair," in which a number of black-outlined white figures seem to be moving against an abstracted gray-brown background. What really stands out in "The Red Chair," however, is the chair itself. It's such a vividly hued red that the adjacent human subjects nearly melt into the background.

April Rimpo and Elaine Weiner-Reed exhibit through June 8 at the Bernice Kish Gallery at Slayton House, 10400 Cross Fox Lane in Wilde Lake Village Center in Columbia. Call 410-730-3987.

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