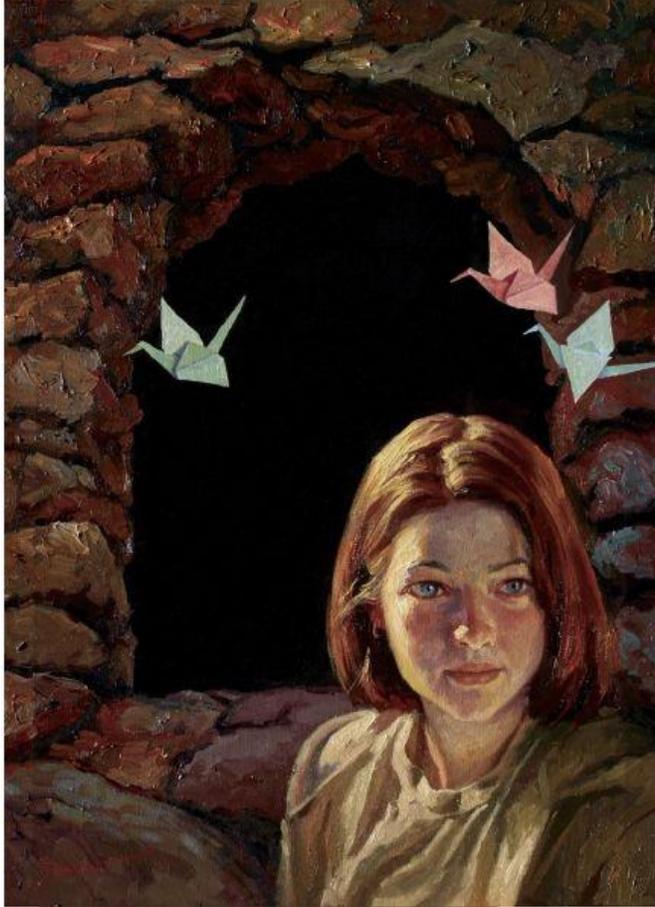
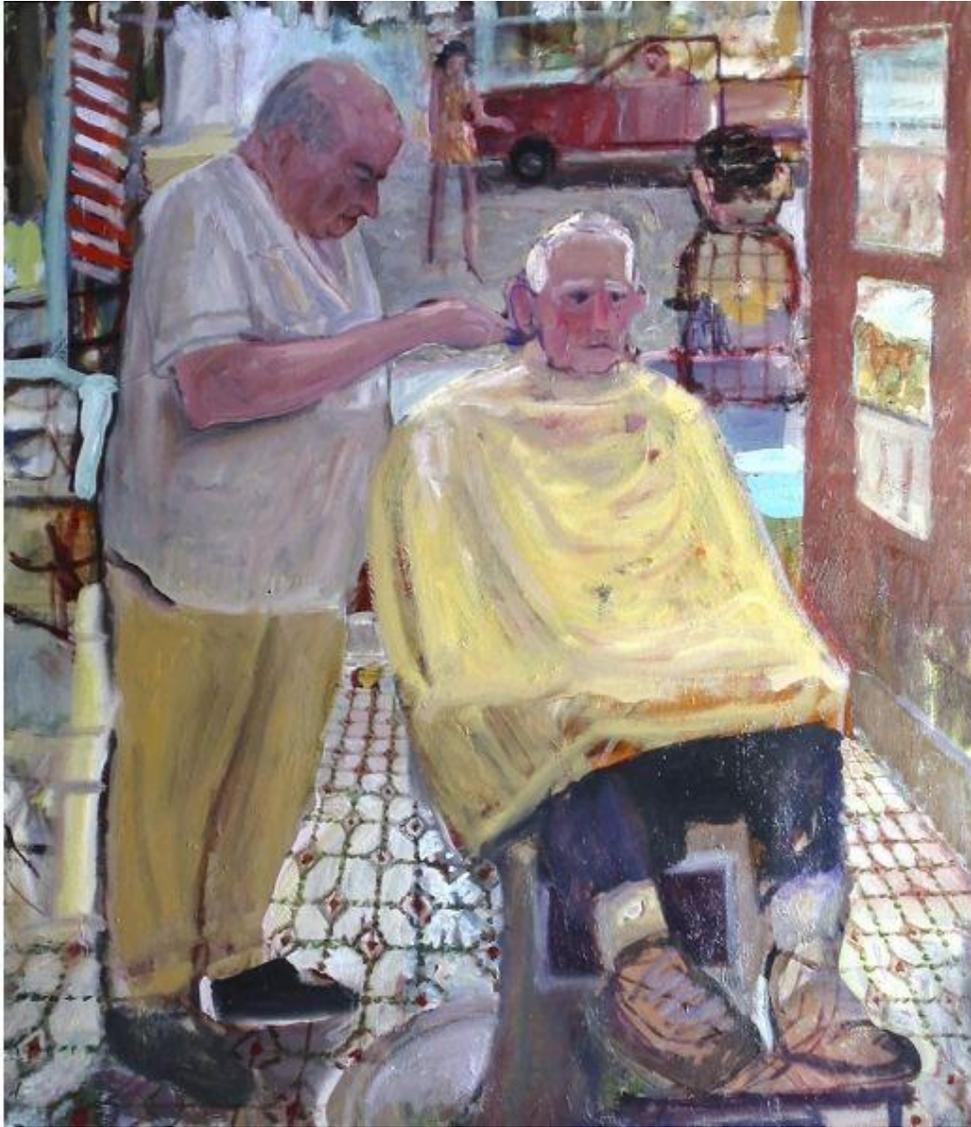


Southeastern Ohio artists' works feature variety of mediums







Geography is a common denominator in a new exhibit at the Riffe Gallery.

Represented in “Artists of the Winding Road A-Z” are works by seven artists who live in cities in southeastern Ohio — namely, Athens and Zanesville, the two cities which inspired the exhibit title.

Kelsey Duncan and Brad Schwieger live in Athens; Alan Cottrill, Paul Emory, Michael Seiler, Yan Sun and John Taylor-Lehman live in Zanesville.

The artists might be clustered in a particular region of the state, but the similarities end there. The show includes both abstract and figurative paintings as well as sculptures made out of materials ranging from bronze to bottle caps.

“I think they thrive on their diversity,” curator Susan K. Gottlieb said of the selected artists, all of whom know each other. “There is a very healthy exchange of thinking and philosophy behind it, but yet each one of them is such an individual that he can’t help but produce what he does exactly the way he does it.”

Viewers entering the gallery will likely be drawn to the work of John Taylor-Lehman, which is displayed near the entrance.

At first glance, “Flowers in Red and White Vase” appears to be a still life. In fact, the piece is not a painting at all; instead, variously colored bottle caps are arranged to suggest a display of flowers. The red-and-white vase of the title is made up of Coca-Cola caps; the rich blue background, Bud Light caps.

Taylor-Lehman has an affinity for animals, using caps to represent a jabiru, a two-headed snake, a snail and several fish. “Red Toothed Ohio Fish” presents a creature comprised of Coca-Cola, Corona Extra and Blue Moon caps — with shards of an Ohio license plate added to approximate fins.

Alan Cottrill’s stately bronze busts depict George Armstrong Custer, Abraham Lincoln and Jesus. A life-size sculpture of Russian monk Grigori Rasputin — also in bronze — is striking in both scale and detail; the bearded figure raises one hand and holds the other across his robed chest.

More unnerving is “Hungarian Heads,” two related, wall-mounted stoneware pieces by Kelsey Duncan. In each piece, a pair of devilishly laughing heads looms over the viewer.

Brad Schwieger’s “Industrial Landscape” — also in stoneware — presents narrow tubes that resemble intricate smokestacks. The artist’s “Industrial Teapot” imagines a kettle with a smokestack-like extension on top.

Paul Emory’s oils-on-canvas depict scenes both odd and ordinary. “Grandma’s Macaw” features the parrot of the title in the foreground, with its owner — an elderly woman — peering into its cage; the picture’s point-of-view encourages the viewer to see things through the parrot’s eyes.

“The Barber Shop” is more straightforward, but the blank expression of the elderly man in the barber’s chair is unmistakable: Is he pondering life-and-death matters as he is getting his hair trimmed?

Abstract works by Michael Seiler are notable for their use of color. Several of the five pieces in the “Dances with Fire” series — in asphalt, alkyds and oil — feature pale, inviting tones amidst a generally dark palette.

Yan Sun’s oils-on-canvas are unfailingly imaginative. In “Dream,” a red-haired young woman is seen in front of a dark cave, at the entrance to which are three batlike creatures. In a surprising choice, the flying animals resemble colorful origami figures.

For art buffs, the highlight might be the artist’s “Dialog with Henry Moore,” in which another red-haired girl plays a violin before Moore’s iconic sculpture “King and Queen.”

The sky is a surreal swirl of red, orange and yellow, suggesting the importance of artistic pursuits even in the midst of what might be an apocalyptic setting.