

Exhibit brings together four local artists in cohesive works

By Wesley Pulkka / For The Journal

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ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. — At the end of every episode of “The A-Team,” Hannibal Smith, played by George Peppard, would light his cigar and say, “I love it when a plan comes together.” I don’t know if gallery owner April Price and artists Jon Carver, Marietta Patricia Leis, Edwina Hawley Milner and Mayumi Nishida lit one up finishing the installation of “Illuminexus,”



“Ascension 1” By Marietta Patricia Leis

a collaborative exhibition, but they certainly earned a good smoke.

The show grew out of a conversation between Leis and Price regarding the possibilities of cross-pollination between Santa Fe and Albuquerque artists. The result is a powerful show with a variety of divergent sensibilities coming together with a surprising coherence of creative intent.

Though wildly different in some respects the four artists complement each other’s work.. The largest and most complex piece is “Plenum” a multilayered mobile and true collaboration between longtime New Mexico arts writer and artist Carver and his wife, Nishida. The piece is made up of transparent and translucent circular discs tied together with and hanging from clear nylon fishing line.

Each painstakingly constructed and designed acetate disc – ranging from 6 to 16 inches in diameter – is a unique part of the whole narrative consisting of a range of silk screened and hand-painted images, including cats, birds, furniture, mandalas and small vignette-like scenes from a stage play. The piece has great street cred, with its first 2013 iteration having been shown at Gallery Zone, an artist-run art space in Japan.

Like Dan Aykroyd in “Ghostbusters” who inappropriately thought of the MarshmallowMan at the very wrong moment, my first thought on viewing “Plenum” from a distance was Lawrence Welk’s champagne bubble intro.

It might not have been a bad thought if Welk and his gaggle of songbirds, musicians and accordion players could knock out a credible rendition of Igor Stravinsky’s “Firebird Suite” but they probably could not. So I apologize to “Plenum” and its makers.

In “The Big Question,” Carver has buried words that ask the viewer to consider the nature of life. The high-energy composition is reminiscent of some Hindu stone temples that are so elaborately embellished with carvings that they seem to be melting in the sunlight and come close to turning into pure sound.

Nishida offers an inverted silk-and-wood pyramid and several light-catching panels that move and vibrate as the viewer passes by. My favorite among those is “Nocturne in Glass” a deep-blue composition brimming with geometric ghost forms.

Leis, the only Albuquerque artist in the gang, is a perennial minimalist with a penchant for romantic ambiance. While on an artist winter residency in Iceland, she had a love affair with the all-pervasive darkness of winter.

During that winter, Leis produced beautifully dark but not foreboding images titled the “Ascension Series” that exude greenish-blue light from within.

Her paintings’ light comes from deep within the composition as if filtered through the densely poetic atmosphere of an Icelandic winter’s eve.

Without having to lift her brush to canvas, Milner has had an enormous positive impact on the arts of New Mexico through her involvement with the Women in the Arts Museum in Washington, D.C., and her contributing efforts on behalf of the New Mexico chapter of Women in the Arts.



“Plenum” By Mayumi Nishida and Jon Carver

She’s a heck of a painter and collage artist on top of it all. Gustave Klimpt and his unbridled celebration of Art Nouveau aesthetic tenets are an unapologetic inspiration for Milner, who freely applies gold leaf to large abstract compositions that heat up the gallery with bold hot colors and mural scale diptych and triptych formats.

With titles like “Pathway to Paradise,” “Dancing Round-a-bout” and “Passing Crossroads,” Milner is an artist on the move. Her paintings are bold and well-executed. For a variety of reasons and changes in her life, Milner’s newest series is titled “The Klimpt Collages” from which she selected eight little honeys for this exhibit. My favorite is a young lady in profile surrounded by flower blossoms. Though a collage the piece retains a true painterly look and feeling.

This is a do not miss experience.