






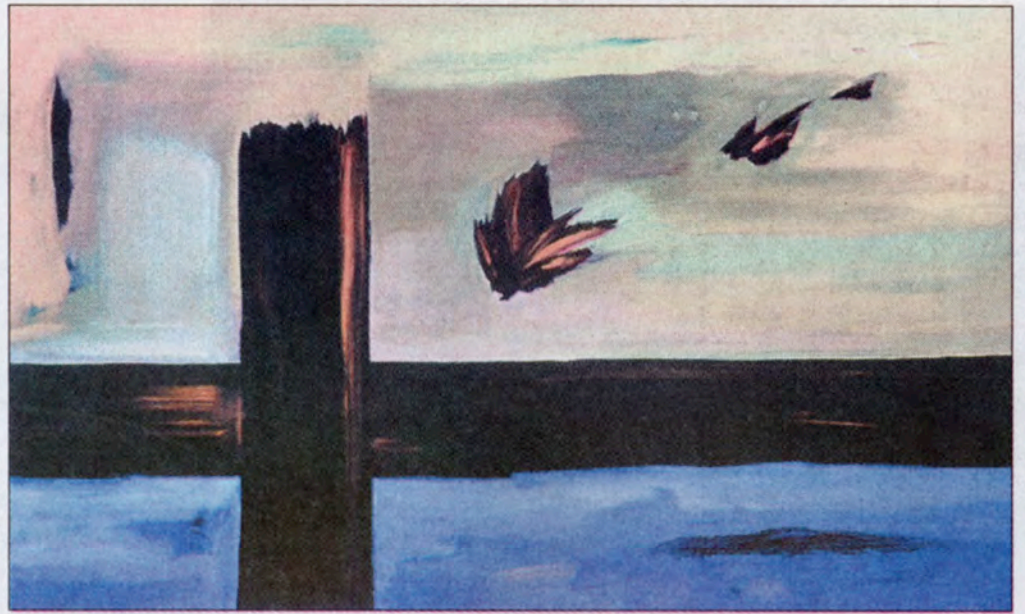


The New Mexican's Weekly Magazine of Arts,
Entertainment & Culture  May 23 - 29, 2003

Pasatiempo



TWISTS   
   ON THE
TRADITIONAL



Brush with the unknown

If you wake up one morning and discover the sky is bright gold, you can bet your bottom dollar that Dick Evans painted it during the night. Evans isn't trying to reconfigure the color schemes of nature just for the hell of it.

Rather he uses unconventional colors to elicit an emotional response from viewers. In other words, the sky may not be gold, but it may make you feel golden.

There's more to Evans' work than that, and while some of his skies *are* gold, that's probably not the right color to choose when discussing the majority of his pieces. In his acrylic paintings, red, black, purple and auburn mix and meld with yellow, orange, green and mauve to play up the more somber edges of the landscape.

Acknowledging that his work is more about self-examination than self-expression (although the latter plays a role), Evans seems to be urging the viewer to enjoy seeking out the dark side of nature. His paintings are creepy and compelling at once.

Curious? Then swing by Joyce Robins Gallery, 201 Galisteo St., from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. today, May 23, for the opening reception of Evans' show *Focus of Enigma*.

"Darkness is a part of something that's around us all the time," Evans said in an interview in his Santa Fe studio. "It's that other part of what makes up the world. When I look at art to which I respond, it's nearly always edgy and a little dark. But I don't see myself as a dark person."

The New Mexico native (he was born in Roswell but raised in Texas) studied architecture, sculpture, ceramics and painting at both Texas Tech University and the University of Utah. For a long time his work has been inspired by his frequent trips into the wilderness, where he enjoys camping and fly-fishing.

Evans brings back something of the wilds with him when he paints. In the past he has created poplar trees that emit a menacing air as they dominate his canvases with their imposing, shadowy presence. "There's always this underlying element to nature," Evans explained. "It's not that I think it's dangerous. But I always understand that one needs to pay attention out there."

"You're far enough out that a small happenstance — something that if it occurred in your back yard wouldn't be serious — could throw you. There's something unknown out there that I like a lot. I guess I'm looking for some unknown to visit. If it wasn't unknown, I wouldn't want to go there."

So Evans takes you to that unknown, even though, on the surface, all seems tranquil enough. For instance, when the artist took part in one of Karan Ruhlen's famous cup shows, he painted



Above, *Square With Six*, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 inches

Top left, *Black Square With Orange Sky*, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 inches

Top right, *Three in Golden Sky*, 2002, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 66 inches

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BARBARA ROSEN
Antique and Estate Jewelry

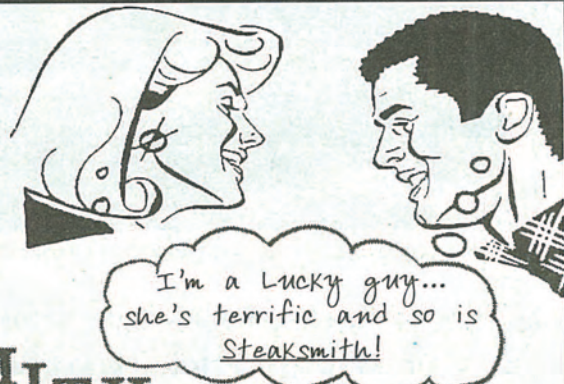


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Brush with the unknown, continued from Page 40

a coffee cup. That sounds innocuous enough, but this coffee cup looked as if it might swallow the drinker.

The artist doesn't want to explain or analyze his own work, though he loves using it as a divining rod for his own psyche. "I love looking at them," he said. "I'm amazed at how much I learn from doing that. It's the reason I paint. Ultimately it's an exploration of me."

But do creating these pieces provide answers to his search for self? "The immediate response to that is yes," he said. "But the obvious next question is how? I don't know how. They just do."

Perhaps it's appropriate that the paintings hold the same potential for viewers. His 17 pieces for the show share similar traits: multilayered color fields that manage to spotlight clear figures of nature, including bushes, trees, skies, hills and brightly lit energy flows that pop up here, there and yonder, acting as signposts to that unknown.

Evans has added a dark, square form to many of the works. At first glance they seem to be small adobe houses, although the artist says that isn't his intent. These architectural objects play against the rest of the figures in the paintings, suggesting an uneasy balance between man and nature perhaps.

Evans said he's not interested in what is clear in nature, be it a blue sky or dusty arroyo. Rather he's intrigued by what might be out there. You can catch fleeting glimpses of that something yourself if you open up to the possibility. "My favorite reaction from people who know my work is when they tell me that they've been out in the landscape and have seen something that they wouldn't have recognized had they not seen my work," he said.

But don't go looking for a life preserver of familiarity when you study Evan's paintings. You may want a rule book, but you'll be treading in a land with no rules. It's not important to Evans himself that you understand his work; he's not even sure he gets it.

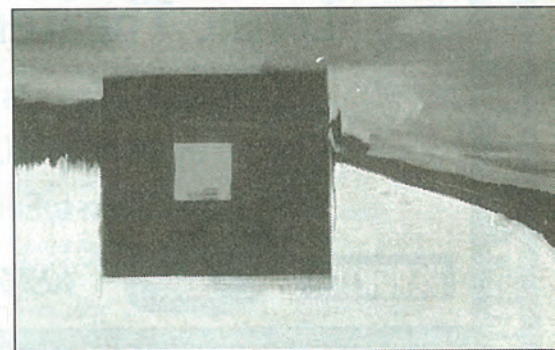
"That 'understand' business is a term that I don't like to connect to art," he said. "People often say, 'I don't like it so I must not understand it.' But I understand a lot of things that I don't like at all — maybe that's why I don't like them."

"I think you can look at something and not like it — but still understand it. It may not be for you, that's all. It's a strange analogy, but it's just like not understanding broccoli. What's to understand? You taste it, and you either like it or you don't like it, even if you know it's supposed to be good for you."

"I never had a person say they understand my work. More often the opposite happens. They'll say, 'I don't understand what this means, but part of me is responding.' And it's important to me that people are comfortable liking or disliking it, trusting their instinctive response."

Maybe Evans' work is beyond comprehension. Interpret it as you will; he's open to any feedback at all. Don't be surprised, however, if the work says to you, "Hey, there's this dark place over there that's not so bad. Follow me; I'll take you there."

Just be sure to bring a flashlight. And maybe a lifeline so you can get back just in case you don't like it out there. ◀



Red Square in Black, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 48 inches

DETAILS

- ▼ Focus of Enigma by Dick Evans
- ▼ Opening reception 5:30-7:30 p.m. today, May 23; exhibit through June 6
- ▼ Joyce Robins Gallery, 201 Galisteo St., 989-8795