THE
Santa Fe's Monthly magazine of the Arts • July 2003

Out of Focus:
What's Going On?

DICK EVANS: FOCUS OF ENIGMA

JOYCE ROBINS GALLERY
201 GALISTEO STREET, SANTA FE

The velocity of Dick Evans' brushstroke is the first indication of this native New Mexican's passion for paint. Densely rendered, his broad swipes of Prussian blue, vermilion red, and lime send us on a retinal ride through the canvas. Yet there is more at work here than a formulaic pattern. There is something haunting in the bewitching hour where most all these works reside, not unlike the eerie feeling at twilight during a countryside walk where ill-defined shapes lead to uneasiness, illusion, and unparalleled colors in the firmament.

Evans is an avid outdoorsman, and it is clear he has been imprinted with the Southwest's extraordinary light shows. Silhouetted forms of trees, bushes, and what appears as a small adobe house with a squarely lit window are found throughout the artist's paintings. Monsoon season's olive drab clouds serve as a backdrop for many of the pieces in the show, as do the winter's dark lavender turquoise, summer's sweltering golds, and spring's blustery cloud formations.

Dick Evans, *Square beyond Lavender*, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 24", 2003

Evans pulls on a number of strings in his artistic repertoire to make his pot boil. A former ceramicist, he retains the tactility inherent in building with clay—the paint is thick as slip, and glides like it. Likewise, his architectural background fuels a compulsion to work with structural and compositional underpinnings to hold the massive color fields.

No doubt Evans takes great pleasure in creation. His spontaneity, epitomized in vivacious strokes of blazing hues, makes for punchy, crowd-pleasing canvases in luminous and sometimes screechy colors. Because the shadowy figurative elements stand as outlines in a dusky and edgy atmosphere, a sudden brilliant chartreuse singularly shakes the semi-abstracted scene. No wonder then that when puce and lime meet cadmium and oxide as in *Square with Green Line*, the viewer is thrown into pure visual abstraction through a complex clash. There is the whiff of a highly commercial product at work in these acrylics, but Evans is disarmingly sincere in his work. If the speed of execution precludes long laboring hours on each canvas, the work undoubtedly captures and elicits the kind of emotional response one encounters by wandering out into unconventional landscapes.

Evans keeps us alert to the uncanny forces of nature, insisting we pay close attention to what we might fail to see, as the overlooked can be dangerous.

In this austere and exuberant world, gloom and melancholy are tempered with the knowledge that shifts in weather—not unlike our own temperament—are swift, and skies or moods of funereal bleakness can suddenly give way to stunning shafts of golden beams. This being the case, we are assured that our own flare-ups are but preludes to more serene upper atmospheres.

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