

Three Women Painters unveil Landscapes of the Spirit



By Nate Smelle

The exhibit *Three Women Painters: Landscapes of the Spirit* is currently on display at the Art Gallery of Bancroft. Sponsored by Barbara Allport, the show features the work of local artists Eva Dametto, Leilah Ward, and Clasina Weese. Each of the 24 pieces in the exhibit draws from the artists' inner worlds to express that which cannot be articulated through words or the mind.

"I feel like the whole exhibition is a journey of conscious awakening," Ward said.

She believes creativity is an essential part of human nature that inspires us to appreciate life and experience joy. Ward also considers it the driving force behind evolution.

"Everyone is creative," she said.

"It is one of the most beautiful aspects of Humanity. We are so critical of ourselves. Criticism and judgment are what stifles creativity. And we are taught to work hard, and to think that if we are enjoying something, it must not be important! How crazy is that? What makes us feel alive and gives us joy isn't valued. This is why it's so important to nurture creative play in children."

All three artists share a similar style and inspiration for their visual expressions, however prior to being partnered up for the show they had never painted together before.

"These visions can just pop in sometimes when I'm busy doing something, thinking about something or feeling an emotion," Ward added.

"They also come to me when I listen to music and they come to me in dreams. Or in a dream I'll be painting something. Sometimes the paintings come out looking like what I saw, other times, they take on a life of their own and that's when my intuition kicks in. It's as if I am bringing the image out from another world or dimension onto the canvas."

Dametto, like Ward, said her paintings often come from visions that arise from a place of meditation. Pointing to one of her paintings she explained how the once blank canvas took on the spirited imagery on display at the AGB.

"I was lying on the floor stretching for yoga and I looked at the blank canvas and I saw an owl, so I painted it," said Dametto.

"Before I knew it, it turned into this beautiful little creature that was filled with power. It's hard to explain. It's like I get hit with a wave and then I just start adding and adding painting and pulling and putting feathers on. I just get moved and become a bit insane I guess."

While she was painting another of the pieces in the show, Dametto said the strangest thing happened. Hearing the sound of a repetitive tapping outside she looked out the window of her studio to see what she described as a flock of woodpeckers dive-bombing the building.

As a visionary and abstract artist, Weese said many of her paintings begin as doodles in paint on canvas that develop their own spirit. Taking a close look at some of her work currently decorating the AGB walls, Weese described how a mistake on one of her works evolved into a bear, which then transformed into a type of demonic-looking creature.

"Sometimes I begin painting with a realistic image in mind, but then it will take on its own spirit or demon," said Weese.

"Creativity is like a seed that you keep inside of you and once you touch it you can't ignore it and it grows and grows. I started out

painting very traditional watercolour landscapes and then I moved onto abstract expressionism. Now I'm sort of settling down to a blend of abstract landscapes.?

The opening reception was held on Friday, Sept. 4 and will remain on display at the AGB until Saturday, Sept. 26.