

EXHIBIT REVIEW

Durham in her prime with 'A Hilly Place'

Jeanette R. Durham has a light, tender touch that makes you concentrate on the realities of nature and enjoy abstract fabrication at the same time.

The Jordanville artist has 26 paintings and drawings in her "In Midstream: 1967-1997" exhibition at the Herkimer County Community College Foundation gallery through Oct. 30.

Judging from her earliest work, "Orange and Green," an abstraction that contains hints of the human form, Durham has been true to her abstract ideals for quite a while.

The artist also has several realistic works on display, perhaps to show that she is adept in the style. As crisply executed as the abstractions, they include a portrait of "Ethan": a sprawling look at misty mountains; a floral, filled with movement, and a cliff overlooking the sea.



Jonas Kover

The crux of Durham's work, though, is a view of nature rendered in an abstract, but recognizable form and sparsely colored patterns.

"A Hilly Place," three paintings of mountains and clouds, offer some of the most dominant characteristics of her genre: a generous use of white space, suggestion of place, well-crafted lines, thin layers of paint, intriguing coloration, and curvy, organic forms.

In the trio of paintings, Durham uses bright, snappy, but not overt pastel hues to gain attention, although her palette can be darker and more true to nature in other works. She draws you in with lines of suggestion and wispy masks of paint. Soon you are enjoying one of those fleeting communions with nature.

A precise painter, Durham uses a minimal amount of paint in flat gesture, like a watercolorist, to enhance minimal natural forms.

Strong evidence of this precision is her 1996 charcoal drawing of a doline, or sink hole, which is well-rendered, discriminating and inviting.



In Midstream, 1967 - 1997

Submitted photo

Jeanette R. Durham

► THE PAINTER'S BOX

What: Jeanette R. Durham, "In Midstream: 1967-1997."
Where: Herkimer County Community College Foundation Gallery.
When: Through Oct. 30.
Admission: Free.
Hours: 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday.

About the artist

Residence: Jordanville.
Education: SUNY College at Oneonta, MS in Ed. 1994; Westchester Art Workshop, 1980, Art Students League, 1971; Montclair State University, B.A. 1967.
Solo Exhibitions: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, 1997; Mohawk Valley Center for the Arts, Little Falls, 1994; Pleiades Gallery, New York, 1993; South Shore Arts, Little Falls, 1991; SUNY Institute of Technology at Utica/Rome, 1988; Cambridge Arts Council, Cambridge, Mass.

Unfortunately, the three following oils that put the doline in color, appear too allusive for any desired effect.

Durham uses this scattering of bits, or swatches, of color in several places. It is unusual and it sometimes hits the mark.

In her large 1965 oil, "Birds in the Air," for instance, bursts of brown and blue colors create a feeling of movement in a misty sky. While slightly befuddled at first, I found the title helped explain the painting. Birds soar without being clearly defined.

A more direct use of color and emotion is shown in *Aurora Borealis*, with large swatches of pink luminous paint against a dark black and brown background. Of more abstract intent, the colors seem to flare at you — and while the paint is still mildly applied, there is a hint of passion.

One of the finest paintings is

"Waterfall," a 1990 oil that is an affable, sensitive, colorful allegory of the woods — with portions seemingly broken into pieces like a puzzle, but, in effect, fitting very well together.

Her latest oil, "Adirondack Horizon," has a pure blue-and-white background of mountains and clouds, which moves to more abstract brown rocks in the foreground that have a living quality about them.

Another attraction is "Buffalo," a 1971 abstract oil, with very interesting colors placed with delicate flat strokes. Three charcoal drawings of rocks are also shown. Nicely done, they capture the essence of form.

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