

Cultural diversity Perspectives 2010

By Jessica Santina

The concept behind the upcoming spring exhibit at the Stremmel Gallery is that there really isn't one.

"Pete [Stremmel] and I literally sat down with files of artists that we currently represent and started pulling them together, looking for how they'd mix and flow together," says gallery director Turkey Stremmel. "We wanted both sculpture and paintings, and wanting to bring in some new, fresh names in addition to our existing artists."

That thick file of new artists, in addition to Stremmel's existing portfolio of nearly 40 artists, was whittled down slowly to 15 artists to showcase from around the West and Midwest.

The exhibit, *Perspectives 2010*, features a diverse blend of artists, four of whom are brand new to Stremmel, working in completely different media, themes and sizes. The only requirement, according to Turkey, was that they showcase the best they have to offer, free of constraints. So, in a sense, gallery visitors will get a kind of education in the range of visual arts, talent and artists working on the left half of the United States. Only one of the artists, Maurice Nespor, is from Northern Nevada.

Roger Berry, a Stremmel-represented sculptor, has been making art in Northern California for almost 40 years. His monumental bronze sculptures, found gracing public spaces all over the West, including in Reno at Renown Hospital and the roundabout at Shoppers Square, deal with the notion of balance and how imbalance feels to the body.

"I'm portraying motion and balance through a figurative approach," says Berry. "Looping bands is a strategy I use."

After constructing 3-D models in AutoCAD, he and his two assistants do the forming and welding in his Sacramento farm-based fabrication studio and turn out impressively sized sculptures that manipulate the elements and seem to defy gravity.

Whereas Berry explores the elemental, Patti Oleon is interested in the artificial. The 30-year painter from Los Angeles brings three pieces to *Perspectives* for her first Stremmel appearance. Her work focuses on the unreality of interior spaces that have been contrived and lit to look as if they're habitable—museum period rooms, hotel lobbies, TV or film sets. She photographs them and manipulates the scenes in PhotoShop, creating entirely new, bizarre interior images that only slightly resemble the originals. She then paints those images photorealistically, with the results looking machine-made and entirely smooth.

This three-part process evolved while Oleon was in graduate school, experimenting with light on odd still lifes composed largely of found objects and old photographs that she would set up in her apartment.

"It was about a weird narrative that didn't make sense and was more about the juxtaposition of objects and light," explains Oleon, whose work has earned her grants from The Fulbright Program and The Pollock Krasner Foundation.

Kris Cox from Basalt, Colo. is also a newcomer to the Stremmel Gallery. His work, encaustic paintings that focus on the interrelationships between unlike materials, are abstract representations rooted in ideas of time and memory. *Perspectives* will feature two of his paintings composed of cast lead and beeswax.

"Through heat, they're transformed from one state to another," Cox explains. "One's organic and one's not, one's translucent and one's opaque, and I'm very interested in how they relate on a surface."

Most of Cox's paintings are constructed with putty applied to a scored surface—often wood—then sanded and reapplied repeatedly until a shiny, polished patina forms. "What I'm after isn't necessarily the sheen, but the richness and depth that wouldn't exist without it.