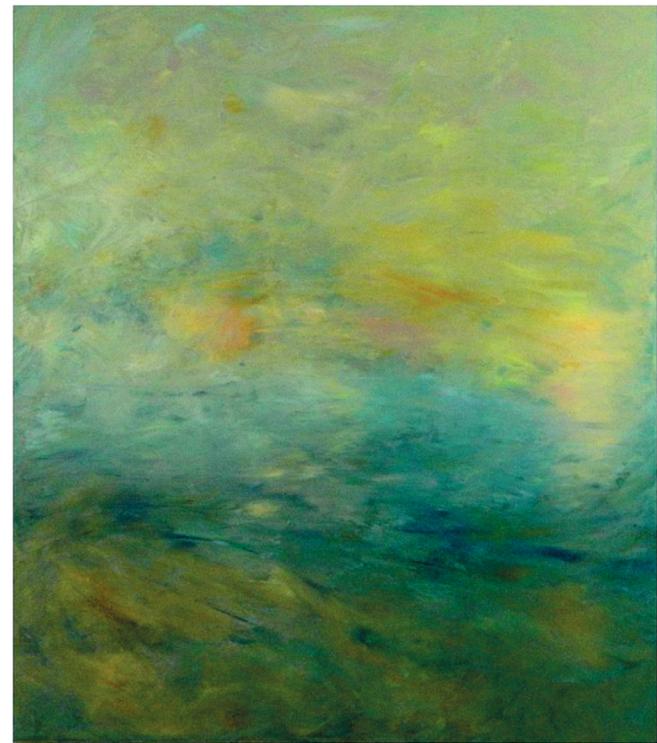




'Lunch With Nancy Pham'



'Lunch With Melissa Arrellano'



'Lunch At Cow Creek'

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Conversation- al Imagery

PAINTER MICHAEL HERRES' ATMOSPHERIC ABSTRACTIONS, LINKED TO THE EXHIBITION 'LUNCH WITH Ö,' NOW AT KARPELES MUSEUM

By *Josef Woodard, News-Press Correspondent*



'Michael Herres, "Lunch with ..."'

When: through August 31

Where: Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, 21 W. Anapamu St.

Hours: Noon to 4 p.m., Wednesday through Sunday

Information: 962-5322

Taken at face value, the current series of paintings by Michael Herres, downstairs at the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, greets the eye in a certain way within a certain artistic context. The artist, who lives and works in Lincoln, Nebraska and Santa Fe, New Mexico, creates large, atmospheric abstractions, mostly in tufted and layered washes of color, suggesting rerouted twilight skies, if any recognizable references at all. These paintings, taken by their purely visual terms, are easy on the eyes, pleasant to behold, and also agreeably innocuous.

But what a difference a conceptual framework makes. Mr. Herres' body of paintings takes as its game plan and riffing reference point, the overall title "Lunch with Ö," and makes the clever narrative proposition – however truthful and specific – that each painting is a reflection on a particular lunch with a particular person. Artistic values, densities, palettes, approaches to brushstrokes and qualities of light and color are, according to the series' conceit, related to various lunch conversations he has had with friends, family, and colleagues, as well as, we assume, flavors in the menu mix.

Armed with this conceptual knowledge, we begin to seek clues behind and within the individual paintings, and view them differently, as abstraction with portraiture and "scene painting" storytelling properties vaguely attached. "Lunch with Nancy Pham" is an elegant and understated study, swirling with muted infusions of greens and blues. We assume, logically, that this lunch mate's character is very different from that recounted in "Lunch with Melissa Arrellano," which draws on a much brighter and more vibrant palette, with steamy orange and purple hues towards the top of the composition, and subdued greens simmering below.

"Lunch with Steve Blazek" is a cloudy and lyrical piece with a milky overlay obscuring color bursts below. "Lunch with LaBuvette," similarly has an air of dreamy abstract impressionism, except that its pigment has been slathered on with a palette knife, roughing up the surface. Was it something that was said?

Veering momentarily away from the strong concept-based nature of this group of paintings, Mr. Herres focuses on place rather than



'Lunch With Sydney Lynch'

person in "Lunch at Cow Creek." In this case, the bluish patina and visual current the brushwork make, decidedly alludes to flowing water, while still folded into the artist's essentially abstract m.o..

In the back room of the Karpeles' downstairs gallery space, lunches with "Nancy Childs" and "Janelle" are almost pastel-like in effect. The paintings are notably soft in texture, especially viewed from afar, but viewed in close-up scrutiny, we see the intricately built-up and interwoven gestures and colors. In a way, the painting's character is not unlike a lazy, pleasant lunch experience, but with complications murmuring beneath the affable surface.

Given the conceptual premise and the sturdiness of the work here, Mr. Herres is not only a fine painter in the contemporary abstraction zone, but also has a vivid lunch life.