

The Art of Marianne R. Klein aka Marika

- By Gregory McLellan

They say you only get one chance to make a first impression. Nowhere is this adage more true than the art world. So, what were my first impressions of the various works of art by Marianne R. Klein? To be honest, it appeared to me that a very colorful impressionist was getting rained on.

I should probably explain that a bit more. The vibrant acrylic colors provide an immediacy that little else could. A motif that became apparent after a minute or two of inspection was the imagery of umbrellas. On a purely aesthetic level, that choice made a great deal of sense. The cornucopia of colors bled together in such a way to make the paintings look like windows to a rainy fall day in the park.



But not all of the pieces were all colorful landscapes with small, featureless people. The artist took several sojourns into the abstract. Unlike Klein's many landscapes, these were much less consistent in aesthetic and theme. One painting, *Mozart Remembered*, looked as though it was half of a Salvador Dali. Another, *Celebration*, appeared to be what would happen if Jackson Pollock got ahold of a broken mirror and some crazy glue.

In addition to the frantic *Celebration*, there was one more piece that utilized broken mirrors. This painting, *On the Beach*, featured the familiar nondescript human shapes holding umbrellas. This time, though, the color palette was much darker, creating a sort of haze. The mirror shards served as the very heavy rain. This technique was certainly creative, but I question the necessity of it for this piece. In the frenetic torrent of *Celebration*, they served a much clearer purpose. In *On the Beach*, however, they seemed to just distract from the painting as a whole. This piece reminds us that knowing when to stop is one of the most important skills an artist needs to master.

On a side note, I do enjoy a good double entendre, so I found a particular pleasure in the choice of the title *Spirits* for a painting of ethereal bottles.

One thing that consistent themes and subjects does is amplifies the differences in anything that deviates from those established norms. The pieces that featured people in them always consisted of couples, or groups of people. That is to say, all of them except for the piece *Lady Matilda*. The painting itself is a simple portrait of a platinum blonde woman with short hair, curly hair in front of a blank background. What struck me about the piece is that it

was the only painting on the walls in which a woman is alone and also has distinct facial features. This became increasingly compelling when that same short, curly, platinum blonde could be seen on some of the far away figures in some of the other works.

While I enjoyed the overstimulation achieved by the intensity of colors in most of the works, my favorite piece of the collection was something quite different than the others. Simply named *Lovers*, it was much more subdued than the landscapes and more coherent than the abstracts. It displayed the familiar plain figures, but this time, much closer and surrounded by a much darker interior environment. Seen from behind, the two were close, but not touching, shoulders slumped, heads bowed towards one another. This piece did what any great work of art attempts to do: evoke a real emotion from the viewer. Standing there, attempting to guess what could have possibly happened to this faceless couple, I sank with them. For a brief moment, their melancholy became my own. This painting, more than any other work hung there, transcended the boundaries of the canvas in a very unexpected and refreshing way.

Overall, the exhibit is fairly pleasant. By refusing to give the far away figures any characteristics, other than the outline of a person, it was easy for the viewer to inhabit the landscape and experience what one feels when walking through a rainy park in autumn. Some of the pieces stuck out from the rest, but for the wrong reasons. They were misfits and orphans in an otherwise consistent exhibit. And only a couple departed from the rest for all of the right reasons. These were the gems that, by themselves, made the entire exhibition well worth examination and contemplation.

Marianne R. Klein's works are displayed through March 24th at the Edgemar Center for the Arts at 2437 Main Street, Santa Monica, CA 90405. It is open to the public and further information can be found at www.edgemarcenter.org. Any questions can be directed to (310) 392-7327.



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