

Every picture ... er, painting ... tells a story

What went into three of the pieces in the 2015 CVG Show

By Frank Carsey

For Kitsap A&E

The famous Russian surrealist Wassily Kandinsky implored: "Lend your ears to music, open your eyes to painting, and stop thinking! Just ask yourself whether the work has enabled you to 'walk about' into a hitherto unknown world. If the answer is yes, what more do you want?"

Art is a vehicle for the telling of stories, sometimes even for viewers to tell themselves their own stories, hoping to understand them better. Probably art is always a story in a visual or physical form. Three Kitsap area artists — all on view through February in the CVG Show statewide juried exhibition at Collective Visions Art Gallery — contributed their art stories for our consideration: Paula Gill of Bremerton, Bill Walcott of Silverdale and Irene Yesley of Bainbridge Island.

Here are the stories behind their work, in their own words:

Bill Walcott: "As I was waiting at dusk to board the ferry in Kingston, I glanced at the waiting boat at the dock, and I was reminded of photos of the Titanic at its dock at Southampton, ready for her fateful journey. In the near darkness, with her inside and outside lights turned on, the ferry seemed gigantic, just like the Titanic. I suddenly felt a sense of foreboding, peering from the chilly darkness of the night toward the warm, inviting vessel. For a moment I was transported to Southampton, on April 12, 1912, eve of departure. Then, reality struck, I came back to Kingston, and of course I didn't expect the Titanic's outcome. In fact, I boarded the ferry, sailed to Edmonds, met friends, had a good dinner at Anthony's, and made it back safely, filled with thoughts of a painting describing my feelings of this experience. The painting is "Ferry Waiting."

Paula Gill: "While traveling near Ridgecrest in southern California, friends took me to see a petroglyph site located on the China Lake Naval Air Weapons Station. Access to

this area, the largest known concentration of petroglyphs in the western hemisphere, is limited to Navy approved guided tours, which fortuitously helps preserve it as a pristine historical site. The petroglyphs were carved into the basalt rocks over millennia so that the oldest elements have acquired desert varnish that newer carvings visibly cut through. One can see, expressed on the stones, layered images that visibly convey great stretches of time and the marks of many artists. When I got home I wanted to express that sense of deep human time, and this series of monoprints, now in the Toro Lounge in downtown Bremerton, is the result."

Irene Yesley: "I have been a fiber artist, earned my MFA in printmaking, and painted on canvas, but my favorite for the past 15 years is painting on Plexiglas. I paint on one side of the plexi, then turn it around and show the other side to the viewer. The paint on the reverse side is very smooth and shiny, a bit like an automobile surface. The challenge with this method is I must work in reverse. What the viewer sees is the reverse of what I have painted. I put images on three layers of plexi, then stack the layers a quarter inch apart in a frame. This way of working gives both visual and actual depth.

"For 'Wind,' the piece in the CVG Show, I used a monotype on the back plexi piece rather than paint, and put gold leaf on the next two layers. Gold leaf, as artists have known for centuries, gives a rich, intense feeling. Because I am working on layers, I was able to apply the gold leaf to two layers creating a rhythmic pattern of small gold pieces moving across and around the surface. That active pattern of movement was my goal. The monotype background of Wind serves to suggest a forest and to add visual depth. The end result is an image your eyes can walk into and explore."

As the author Pat Conroy reminds us, "The most powerful words in English are "Tell me a story" — words that are intimately related to the complexity of history, the origins of language, the continuity of the species, the taproot of our humanity, our singularity, and art itself."



CONTRIBUTED IMAGES

CVG Show works by (from top) Paula Gill, Bill Walcott and Irene Yesley all have their own individual stories to tell.