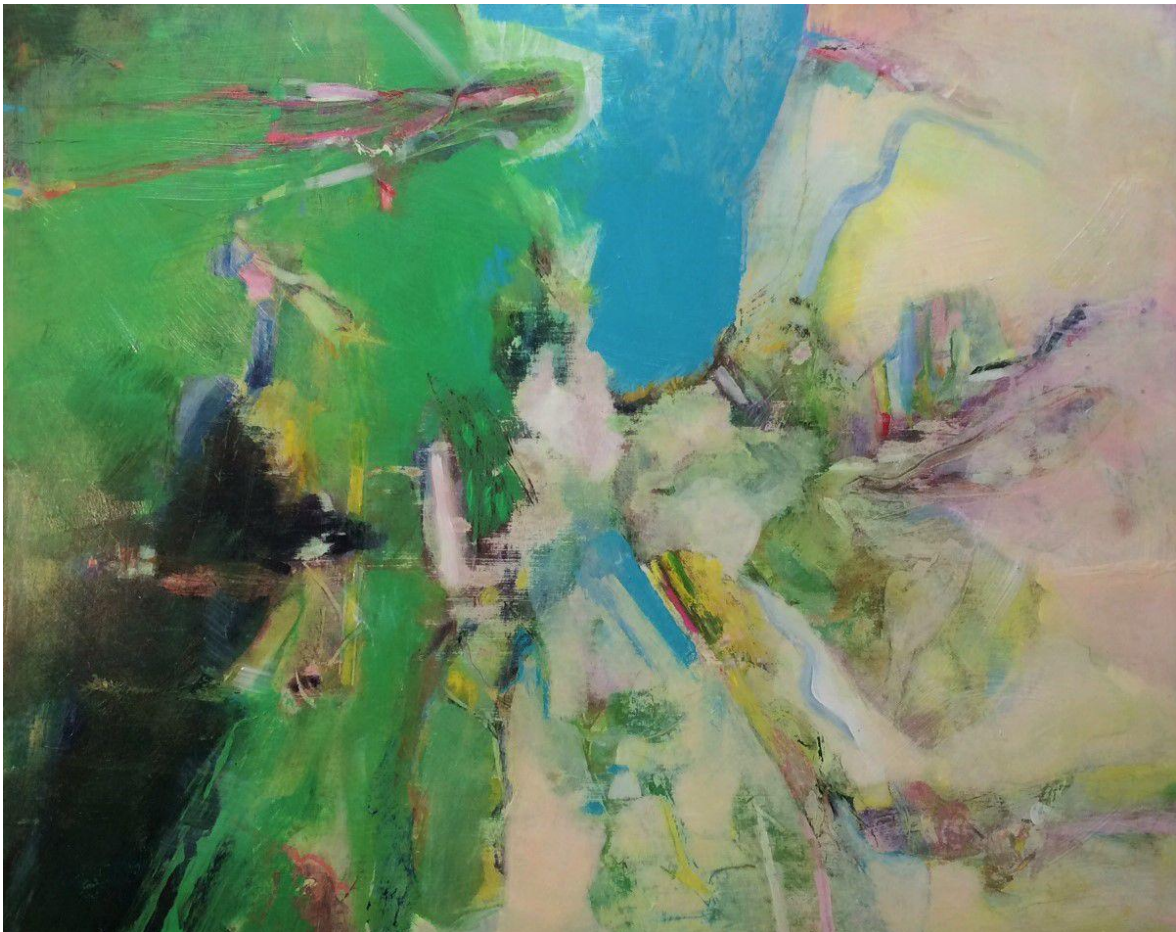


Mid-valley artists Green, Shumway share visions in new show

- PATRICK FANCHER for The E
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"Find Another Way" is a collaborative abstract painting by Bill Shumway and Leslie Green that will be on display in their exhibit, "Two Voices and Duets" at the Benton County Historical Museum in Philomath.

- Provided photo



"Living Color" is an acrylic painting by Bill Shumway and Leslie Green made in response to a poem by Terri Thomas.

- Provided photo

For two artists to share the same canvas, they must trust each other.

Leslie Green developed that trust immediately with longtime friend and fellow artist Bill Shumway four years ago, when she asked him to mentor her transition from pottery to painting.

Green wanted to work with colors and loved the freedom that painting brought.

"I realized I needed a guide and a teacher, and thought Bill is the best painter I know and have access to," she said.

Eventually, they would paint together. During these collaborations, one of them would take the lead for awhile, or they would paint simultaneously with two brushes on the panel.

Green says trust is important when they are painting collaboratively.

"Instead of ego and familiarity determining what we bring to a collaborative piece, trusting each other enables us to take risks and know that it will be OK, we won't offend or disturb each other," she said. "We can freely enter exciting unknown territory. As a result, we grow, and growing/expanding is crucial for both of us."

The two mid-valley artists will present their individual and collaborative abstract paintings in "Two Voices and Duets," an exhibit opening Friday in the Moreland Auditorium at the Benton County Historical Museum in Philomath. The exhibit, on view through Feb. 16, includes a reception Friday night. (See the information box for details.)

Green and Shumway are displaying around 50 paintings in the gallery, with six to eight collaborative images on the same panels. The paintings were done in acrylic, watercolor, mixed media and encaustic with crayon (more on that later).

"A lot of the undercurrent for our work is the influence of nature, directly and indirectly," said Green, who lives in Philomath and is a part-time pottery instructor at Linn-Benton Community College.

For the 66-year-old Green, the show is a followup to her exhibit, "Clay and Canvas: A 50-Year Retrospective," held last June in the Moreland Auditorium. Shumway has also been featured in a past retrospective exhibit at the museum.

Shumway, 76, of Albany, said formally becoming a mentor to Green was ideal for him at the time.

"I was wondering what to do with myself, because I was just retired from doing the Pegasus (Gallery) thing, and I had a lot of health issues at the time," he said.

Shumway operated Pegasus Frame Studio and Gallery in Corvallis for 35 years.

He also teaches plein air painting workshops and will show his work in several more exhibits throughout this year.

Green said she takes lots of notes whenever Shumway comes to critique her work.

"He knows so much about painting and art, and has such a great eye," she said.

About his own paintings, Shumway says people often ask about how he did a particular work or how long it took it paint.

"My usual response is it took me 20 minutes, but it took me 70 years, actually. That is the amount of time it takes to get all of the parts together and spew them out the moment that you're doing it," he said.

Shumway wasn't sure what he could teach Green, whom he regarded as an already amazing artist. "Mostly it was a process of giving her self-confidence and learning more about color."

During their first session in Green's studio, they came to an agreement to get down to the essentials of painting, which led them to abstraction.

"Let's go for content over subject and let the subject reveal itself," Shumway said.

He had noticed that Green focused on the eyes of animals in her drawings and ceramics.

So, for the first painting he advised her on, "Getting Acquainted," they went into the animal's eye to answer the question: What is the animal seeing?

"You're looking in, and you're looking out. We turned it into a metaphor for us," Shumway said.

It is one of several of paintings Green has done in the past two years on display in the exhibit.

The teaching sessions evolved into their working as peers on the same paintings.

"She had a great deal to offer, so I wanted to stick around and learn from her," Shumway said.

The featured collaborative paintings showcase the different approaches by the two artists.

"It was pretty clear right from the beginning, the difference between the way we operated even just with the brush," Shumway said.

He points out that his brushstrokes are aggressive, very male.

"Hers are much more sensuous, curvilinear," he said.

When they collaborate on a painting, neither artist says much.

"When you hook up two competent artists there's a dialogue that happens. It's very deep and for the most part nonverbal," Shumway said. "To find someone like Leslie and have this wonderful intriguing deep conversation without words is such a blessing."

Shumway will display a combination of old and new abstract paintings in the exhibit.

His earliest painting featured is from 1967. He is also showing "Found Home," the first painting he did in Corvallis in 1974, when he hitchhiked from Amherst, Massachusetts, with no support system or art supplies.

A man spotted the 34-year-old Shumway drawing on a napkin in a restaurant, found out that he was an artist and invited him to his house to make artwork that he could buy.

The man had no art supplies for Shumway to use and told him to find something around the house. Shumway discovered a handful of crayons in the cracks of a couch, a piece of construction paper and cardboard, and took a candle from the man's coffee table.

"I went to the kitchen, got a cookie sheet, turned it upside down on the burner, heated up the cardboard and melted the wax, put the paper down and did an encaustic painting with the crayons," Shumway said.

"I was just ecstatic, thirsty for images," he added.

He thought the man would be just as thrilled with his painting as he was. The man wasn't and threw him out.

"I was happy and just went whistling down the street," Shumway said.

He said his new works reveal how Green's influence and their duets have changed his relationship and outlook on painting.

"It has given me more confidence and new pathways," Shumway said.