

Looking for peace

Artists vent their feelings about war

BY JOYCE LYNN

“What can I do as an artist that will make a statement that not all Americans believe war is a solution?” wondered Stinson Beach artist and gallery owner Claudia Chapline as she considered what to enter in an international exhibition slated for this December in Italy.

The result: a triptych resembling stained glass filled with the shapes of faces, peace signs, and math symbols. The Biennale Internazionale dell’Arte Contemporanea selected Chapline’s “Speaking of War, Peace and Bread,” an acrylic on unstretched canvas bathed in blood red, sky blue, and earth green and ochre. Chapline is among an army of Marin artists searching for ways to bear witness to war and promote a peaceful world through their art.

The power of art to inform about war is unmistakable. Pablo Picasso’s “Guernica” depicts the horrors of war, specifically the 1937 Spanish Civil War during which Nazi aircraft mercilessly bombed the Basque village. Picasso’s creation so unnerved U.S. policymakers that a tapestry of it was covered up when Secretary of State Colin Powell attempted to justify U.S. bombing of Iraq at the U.N. last February.

Artists have long expressed matters of war and peace through their art. The recent

Frank Lobdell exhibit at the Legion of Honor in San Francisco dramatized his personal encounters with war, death and a world altered by the Holocaust and Hiroshima. In his life-long artistic quest, Lobdell struggled with pacifist ideals. After World War I, Paul Klee used an angel as a motif to bridge reality and spirituality.

Richard Kamler, whose metal sculptures of buffaloes graze in Marin backyards, is organizing “Seeing Peace” for International Peace Day—2004 in San Francisco and 2005 in New York. Marking the opening session of the General Assembly at the United Nations, artists from 191 countries will create their visions of peace from their own cultural perspectives. Kamler calls art “our one true global language.”

San Rafael artist Christine Cohen believes that what happens within the individual’s mind is the key to peace and that art can change lives by changing minds. “The government we choose is an expression of individual consciousness,” she said. “If I want to manifest peace, I cannot do that by hating war, but only by loving peace.” Prompted by U.S. action against Iraq, Cohen painted a four-part series featuring the pear as transformational object. The pear’s sensuous shape reminds Cohen of the human form and of the planet. Peace Pear #1 envisions global consciousness moving from polarized mind-sets symbolized by a tetrahedron to the cohesive shape of the octahedron.

Rather than overtly political, the art of Inez Storer of West Marin is reflective and personal. What shows up on the canvas bubbles from her subconscious. In the mixed media piece, “And, So Goes the World,” which she started on September 11, 2001, Storer mixes personal history, memory and fantasy, and in the pro-

cess raises a metaphysical question.

She loaded the canvas with the names of countries she knew as a child, a passage from Genesis from a book she has possessed since childhood, and family mementos like letters and photographs. According to the text, it took God seven days to create the world. Storer wondered how long it would take humankind to destroy it.

The Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco is planning to include “And, So Goes the World” in its first installation when the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum re-opens in 2005.

Mariana Goodheart’s assignment for her summer art students at the College of Marin was to create a composition based on a social or political issue about which they felt strongly and to use visual images to communicate those feelings. Goodheart, whose studio is in Novato, currently is working on a piece she says was “motivated intuitively” by the U.S. invasion of Iraq. The feeling her fabricated steel sculpture will embody—weeping.



ART NOTE: Finding an art class

We’re lucky to live in a place where numerous artists are busy practicing and showcasing their work. But where do you go if you’re looking for a place to bring out the artist within you?

One of the best places to start looking for adult art classes is the **College of Marin**. This fall, on the Kentfield campus alone, the art department offered over 30 classes, including everything from Developing Visual Literacy to Glass Fusion. Painting, charcoal, watercolor, sculpture, jewelry making, ceramics—you name it, College of Marin has it. Registration is ongoing at www.marincommunityed.org, or call 415/485-9305 for more information.

Art Works Downtown Inc.’s principal purpose is to establish and maintain a charitable center for the arts in downtown San Rafael, and to encourage artistic activities. Along those lines, the center, located at 1337 Fourth Street, offers classes for all ages in a wide range of media. A recent lineup of classes included Watercolors and Acrylics; Collage and Abstract Painting; Mosaic, Clay

and Marble Sculpture; Ceramics; Creative Photography; Calligraphy; and Image Transfer. A Life Drawing class taught by Amanda Sanow is ongoing and meets on Monday evenings. The center also provides affordable workspace for more than 40 local artists and organizations, providing an ongoing opportunity for the public to visit and view art in the making. Call 415/451-8119, or visit www.artworksdowntown.org.

Sight & Insight Art Center in Mill Valley (616 Throckmorton Ave.; 415/388-4331) is an interesting mix of studio, gallery and workshop that offers classes in a variety of subjects. Founder Ann O’Hanlon willed the studio and exhibition space to the paying membership that is now responsible for keeping the Center positioned at the intersection of art and community outreach. Customized workshops are open to all, and feature classes ranging from papermaking to paint dancing, ceramics to monoprinting. For a small fee, studios and galleries are also available for private use. See www.sightandinsight.org.

Dorallen Davis teaches drawing and painting en plein air (on location) throughout Marin. She is currently teaching classes through Tamalpais High and IVA at Hamilton. Ms. Davis is a colorist who believes in drawing not for the purpose of expressing what is real but so the artist may be able to access and communicate what he or she “sees.” Drawing ability becomes a tool as important as the medium and the brush. The beginning student starts indoors, drawing (from life) very simple shapes with charcoal, and then expands from there, eventually moving to painting on location. Visit her Web site at www.landscapesofcalifornia.com for details.

On the Net, one of the best sources for local art instruction is **Artist Resource**, which offers a weekly updated list of Bay Area classes, events, gallery contacts, competitions and other opportunities for artists and writers. Many of the classes listed are small, featuring professional artists giving private instruction in everything from silk painting to basketry. See www.artistresource.org.

—Terry Scheidt



PEACE PEAR #1, ACRYLIC BY CHRISTINE COHEN