

# Won't somebody tell me: What is a person?

BY GLENN GARSON

When you see August Hoerr's portraits up close, you see an oil abstract, but as you step back away from the painting, the epiphany hits you that you are seeing a person.

Blind Willy Johnson, the preacher and blues singer asks in one of his songs "Won't somebody tell me: What is the soul of a man?" Later he answers his own question: "Nothing but a burning light!" August's paintings ask, "What is a person?" And his answer is just as universal.

August portrays individual human beings with a rich palette of impasto, which raises his subject from the canvas and deconstructs them for our eyes. August reaches his final portrait of the person by steps, building upon previous steps, until he reveals the person underneath. Rather than wipe away his initial attempts to capture his subject, August layers his later brush strokes over his initial



The Photo is a painting by August Hoerr titled "Hidden Words in a Murky Tongue"

marks until a dense surface of multiple workings evolves to illuminate the person underneath.

One notable element of August's pieces are the seemingly unintentional flourishes in his images, which manifest themselves as smudges and splotches in the negative space of his portraits. These artifacts whisper into our ear, like a sigh, that we are an audience to real human beings with all their associated imperfections.

August's earlier paintings were suffused in the warm umber and sienna colored tones of the old masters but over the last 2 years he has brought in more vibrant and pulsating colors that grab the viewer and convey a sense of tension and release.

Bella Vista Art Gallery will hold an opening reception for new works by

August Hoerr on Saturday Oct. 7 from 1-4pm at 240 Clingman Ave., in the heart of the River Arts District. Call (828) 768-0246 for business hours and directions. Visit [www.bellavista.com](http://www.bellavista.com).