

BILTMORE VILLAGE

Local Expressionist Painters in Biltmore Village

BY SARAH MEAD

Two modern expressionists, Margaret Katz Nodine and August Hoerr, who have both been influenced by the European Expressionists, are being featured in Biltmore Village at Bella Vista Art Gallery.

Expressionism is not a style but rather a de-emphasis on depicting the world as we observe it, and instead focusing on how the subject makes the artist feel and respond. Expressionists portray these feelings by distorting, exaggerating and embellishing their subjects. They differ notably from Realists who try to capture a true representation of their subjects. In addition, Expressionists should not be confused with impressionists who distill a spontaneous fleeting subject down to its simple essence or impression. The focus of Expressionists is how the subject makes the artist feel, whereas Realists and Impressionists are trying to depict something that everyone might see or feel.

Margaret Nodine's neighbors and acquaintances in Leicester and surrounding Buncombe County, where

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she moved 7 years ago from Atlanta, serve as the Norman Rockwell centerpieces of her paintings. The big difference between Margaret and Norman is how she borrows the Austrian Expressionist Egon Schiele's notion of charged angular distortion in place of idealized beauty to portray the subjects of her fascination. Norman Rockwell portrayed the idealized images of salt-of-the-earth people who we would recognize if we met them after seeing his portraits of them; Margaret Nodine portrays the hidden inner personal relationships that she experiences as she gets to know those human beings. The distortion is such that she is almost shocked if her subjects actually recognize their own portraits.



**"From General to Specific"
by August Hoerr**

Margaret's edgy charged scene in "Impasse" is a story with multiple strings pulling at your brain. The hulking passive male and the stony fisted, tight-jawed female with weary bags beneath her eyes just beg us to intrude into their moment with questions and opinions. This transforming moment when a relationship teeters on the precipice makes the viewer swallow hard with empathy. Margaret masterfully drops the details into the recipe that comes together to draw the viewer into the drama. It's a piece that bears the test of time, where the hope, and failure, of a relationship are dangled like shining options in front of us. When we are old and have



**"On the Town"
by Margaret Katz Nodine**

come to peace with the demons of our relationship we can still look at this piece and remember the moments when it could have ended.

On the other hand the two gangly woman relaxing in a booth in Margaret's piece "On the Town" fill us with a sense of almost anonymous familiarity and comfort. Two friends, probably lovers, who are watching us watch them. Like lionesses languishing on the shores of a weekend, in a bar perhaps, soaking in the ambiance and feeling good just to be next to each other as they breathe in the same air. Their calm transfixed stares talk to their presence in the moment.

August Hoerr zooms his lens in closer than Margaret, and focuses on individuals rather than relationships. He draws up close and quietly to his subjects, listening to them breathe, talking gently with them about their dreams and their drives. Listening like a doctor to them exhale and inhale until

he hears the echo in their souls. What he paints for us is the light that he sees within them and what he produces is a likeness not just of their external appearance but of their essence as well.

August Hoerr was influenced by the Russian expressionist Chaim Soutine, whose thick impasto brush strokes became a recognizable characteristic of French art in the 1920's. August's brush strokes while emotional in appearance are layered onto the canvas in a sophisticated and controlled storm of expression. Another influence on Hoerr was the

German, via Britain, expressionist Frank Auerbach whose images of friends and familiar people are not portraits but rather distortions of reality that aim to capture the core of the "human presence". Like Auerbach, Hoerr reworks his pieces laying down multiple layers of paint which build, in some of his pieces, to an unexpected depth and thickness that give



"Impasse" by Margaret Katz Nodine

them a very three dimensional appearance when viewed up close.

August's piece "From General to Specific" snatches your eyes from across the room with its bright floral colors against an even lighter background. The uncontrolled locks of hair and deep eyes of his subject which are so clear from across the room break down into flashes of intense colors built up from thick layers, and crevices, as the viewer draws

What August Hoerr paints for us is the light that he sees within his subject.

up next to the canvas. Set in its floating frame the image of the young woman shines outward with a light from deep within her persona.

The European expressionist's bold and exciting rebellion from the mainstream representative images of their day resonates through both August Hoerr and Margaret Katz Nodine. Both artists speak of writing an essay about their subjects not with words but with their brush or palette knife.