



Local motion: Dallas native Lynn Rushton says her paintings aren't static.

Wax Works

Lynn Rushton revives an ancient art form

BY ANNABELLE MASSEY HELBER

THE CRACKED, PLASTER walls of the Deep Ellum Center for the Arts are perfect for holding Lynn Rushton's paintings. There's a certain symmetry with Rushton's use of the ancient encaustic method against the same material that could have held old frescoes, and the coincidence isn't lost on the artist.

"I have a background in art history, and I've always been fascinated with weird frescoes and older things like that," Rushton says. "And contemporarily with frescoes, the ancient Greeks used encaustic. Greek stat-

ues that we think of as stark white were actually brightly colored with encaustic. They even found traces of encaustic on the Parthenon."

A sense of her connection to history seeps into Rushton's conversation as she explains that encaustic is a mixture of damar varnish, beeswax, and pigment, mixed on a heated palette and applied with heated tools to keep it pliable until it hits the painting's surface. "They found a 13th-century woman in France buried with her encaustic tools," she says. "That's another link for me to the history of women as painters."

MET ARTS

Visual Remedies: Stories That Heal

Lynn Rushton Center for the Arts
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2608 Commerce St.
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effect is brighter. "I like the way Richard Diebenkorn put so much emotion into each brush stroke," she says of the noted abstract painter's foray into figurative work. "A lot of my work shows emotion, along with a spiritual conversation and an almost religious feel to it, in the way the people are placed or in the things that are going on around them."

Rushton's sense of purpose, history, and appreciation for irony gave her insight into the timing of her first solo

The 31-year-old Dallas native isn't really tied to Deep Ellum, although she was invited to paint the Carmen Miranda-styled lion in the median at the Commerce Street entrance to the neighborhood. "I'm not one of the so-called Deep Ellum artists," she says. "I am a local artist, and I'm committed to the local art scene." Rushton remembers museum visits to Fair Park as a child in Dallas as her first introduction to art. She earned her BFA in painting and drawing at Vanderbilt and did graduate work at Tulane.

From a distance, Rushton's small encaustic paintings seem lost on the art center's walls. But the minute you get close enough to actually see the images she's crafted in 12-by-12-inch squares, you become involved in her narratives. The subtle wall text combines an infinitive Spanish verb, its English translation, and a compelling, open-ended phrase to give viewers the first clues to Rushton's penchant for storytelling: "Sequirit - to pursue," "Vigilar - to watch over," "Tirar - to pull."

"I wanted to make sure everybody understands that paintings are not a static moment," she says. "They can capture motion. The words help you get into a moment. You wonder what's going to happen, why are they doing it, what just happened. You can start with these questions when you look at the work. Everybody brings their own answers to them."

There's a Van Gogh moment in *Solar*. Men armed with hoes are working in a field, and Rushton uses encaustic to capture the movement and quality of yellow fields of grain, even down to the single shafts being harvested. The waxy, raised surface of the medium - and the artist's skillful use of it - adds texture and life to the image. You can almost smell the smoke

from the cigarette she's painted jutting out from the corner of one worker's mouth.

In *Wishing Well* and *Prisidal Veil*, Rushton's paintings take on a softer feel, reminiscent of Monet. She blends pastels with encaustic and acrylic paint in these works on paper, and the

OnStage

BY CURTIS MARTIN

Language is the real star in Edward Albee's 1966 Pulitzer Prize-winning family drama *A Delicate Balance*. Words roll from the characters' mouths in poetic rivulets of sparkling insinuation, hyper-analytical observation, and pre-crystalline bile. And, like an inbred pride of overfed but understimulated philosopher-kings trying to save their intellectual hunger by cannibalizing each other's emotions, the players roar out ideas and concepts.

In other words, you're not going to know what the hell any of them are talking about most of the time. I don't want to spoil anything by revealing the story's particular plot points, but let's just say that *A Delicate Balance* would make for a much shorter evening if any of its painfully educated and extremely verbose characters were familiar with even one of these three simple phrases: "Aw, shut up," "Get the hell out of my house," or "Well, duh." It's not just the unrealistically complex elocution of Albee's rich, whitebread, chain-drinking characters that makes them difficult to understand (or care about); these people don't behave like anybody you've ever met in real life.

If you can get past all of that and accept them as the one-dimensional walking dissertations that they are, there are many pleasures to be had in Circle Theatre's current production. For one thing, Albee's language delights its forbidding and artificial density, is often quite beautiful. And because *Balance* is virtually a series of monologues, each of the talented actors gets a chance to shine on his or her own. Anne-Lynn Kettles, as the brittle, self-made matriarch Agnes, has several speeches, most having to do with the inequities of being the only person on earth who knows what's right. But it's Joe Berryman as Agnes' ensouping but ineffectual husband, who leaves the best impression as he tells his family a simple story about a pet that one day stopped loving him. The scene is one of the few truly human moments Albee allows any of his characters. Thankfully, Berryman makes the most of it.

Through March 27. Presented by Circle Theatre, 230 W. Fourth St., Downtown Fort Worth. For info, call 817-877-3060.

show at DECA, which coincided with the new art venue's sudden loss of its director, Melissa Sauvage, with whom Rushton worked to develop the show. "When Melissa left, I was really scared," she says. "With all the confusion and turmoil just two weeks before my exhibition, my 'Visual Remedies: Stories That Heal' is ironic. I do hope it is a remedy." ■

See This

The Old Jail Art Center in Albany, Texas, offers a potential road trip to fans of North Texas' WAVE girls. The all-female contemporary art group is showing "The Sound of Red/Icons of Hysteria" in tandem with a retrospective of 1917-1945 art by the women of "The Philadelphia Ten." Through March 21. For info, call 915-762-2269.

