

Entertainment

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Our new normal: With gatherings prohibited, Gallery One is responding to COVID-19 by displaying new works in its windows



ELAYNA YUSSEN/Daily Courier

A mixed media piece titled "From Then to Now" (upper left) by Tommi Drake is part of the "Our New Normal" exhibit that is on display in the front window of Gallery One.

By Kathleen Alaks of the Daily Courier

Though Gallery One has had to close its doors in response to the coronavirus pandemic, the gallery's artists keep working.

"Rather than us being in a state of limbo, I wanted to keep us active," said Cindy Kahoun, manager of the G Street art gallery.

"I put out an email for artists to contribute to a new exhibit. Whether for meditation or for escape, or as a way of dealing with the pandemic, or about the pandemic."

The result is a new exhibit, "Our New Normal," with paintings, mixed media, jewelry, photography and poetry, on display in the front window of the gallery, at 229 S.W. G St.

For many artists, creation is a therapeutic process, a way of processing what they are experiencing, a way of working through these emotional and turbulent times, Kahoun said.

Her own piece in the exhibit is an acrylic painting titled "Our New Normal." Starting by painting a woman inspired by a Frida Kahlo self portrait, Kahoun then added symbols of the pandemic.

The neckline of the woman's dress is ringed with red down-facing arrows — "for the stock market falling" — and call letters of all the television networks bringing us nonstop news — "CNN, FOX, BBC..."

Both the woman and the monkey at her shoulder are wearing face masks in front of a background of criss-crossing branches, symbolizing the mass confusion many people are experiencing.

Among the branches are five spiked coronavirus molecules — "one for every 10 states" — a bat — "where the virus came from" — an owl, a butterfly and a hummingbird.

"The owl is from the book 'I Heard the Owl Call My Name.' It's about death," Kahoun said. "The butterfly and hummingbird are about seeing beauty despite all that's going on around us."

And the yellow spot of sunrise in the upper left corner symbolizes the hope of tomorrow.

"It was so therapeutic to do that painting," Kahoun said.

Artist Kim Sterling contributed a piece he titled "Downloaded," depicting a wildly elongated human figure slumped over a table. He started with a sketch he had done some time ago, scanned it into his computer, then manipulated it using Photoshop software.

"I was once so totally exhausted, so tired I couldn't sleep," Sterling said about how the original drawing came about. "With the pandemic, it's in your face all the time. This fit exactly how I feel about the whole thing."

Sterling's wife Nancy contributed a ceramic piece titled "Out of Sync."

"This piece is how I am feeling about being separated from friends and extended family members," she said. "My world has suddenly gotten out of sync with my normal day-to-day life ... spinning and tumbling out of control right now."

Tommi Drake, who was in the Philippines in early March, had to cut her trip short because of the coronavirus.

"I was so depressed. But when Cindy sent out that email, that got me back out into the studio," Drake said.

She dug out an old print of a windmill. "The colors were drab and I thought, that's the path," she said.

She collaged in photographs of her daughter and son-in-law in face masks — "they're making masks right now," Drake said — and added silhouetted figures on either side, spaced by a blue ruler grid marking off 6 feet of social distancing.

Drake's mixed media piece is titled "From Then to Now."

Terry Arndt's watercolor "Spring Song" celebrates the season, a reminder of all the normal and beautiful things that still happen.

"I was just trying to put out there what's happening right now," Arndt said. "Daffodils just seem to spring up from nowhere, like a burst of sunshine, a little bit of brightness."

The exhibit will continue at least through April. Kahoun invites people who are out shopping or getting takeout food at downtown restaurants to stop by and see it for themselves.

Gallery One is also open by appointment, Kahoun said, for people who want to buy art or gifts. Call the Grants Pass Museum of Art at 541-479-3290 to set up an appointment.

Reach reporter Kathleen Alaks at 541-474-3815 or kalaks@thedailycourier.com.