

William Betts: *Arsenal*, 17 x 27.5 inches, acrylic on composite board



Phillis Ideal: *Crack*, mixed media on canvas, 14 x 14 inches

Elizabeth Cook-Romero | The New Mexican

Pentamorous PERSPECTIVE

Gallery owner John Addison has assembled a group of artists whose work embodies a rather cool aesthetic for *5 Angles on Abstraction*, opening Friday, June 30, at Addison Arts. One uses technology to make slightly askew images that look handmade. Another spends hours hand-sanding lines into precise curves that look machine-made. Some use materials and techniques that are a bit outdated.

William Betts' paintings are composed of parallel colored lines, but for him they are not stripes. Betts' interest in compositions that look like stripes started when he took a slice of a digitally photographed landscape and stretched it on a computer screen.

"I printed it out and looked at it for several months," Betts said. "I realized there was an organic characteristic to it that was a result of its origins." The artist tried stretching randomly selected colors, but, he said, he was never satisfied with the outcome. "That's what stripes are," he continued. "Stripes are decorative. They soothe a different aesthetic nerve than something organic, which goes deeper."

Nature has a crispness, Betts explained, and he tried many different ways of painting stretched images before inventing a complex technology that allowed him to paint narrow, perfectly aligned bands of color.

Betts stretches one-pixel-wide slices from digital images, and within the predictable bands of color, he finds smaller and often surprising rhythms. "I try to strip away everything except the color and that kind of organic quality of the color," he said. "After I finish a painting, the fun part is going back and finding small, inadvertent passages of color."

Betts acknowledges that nature is filtered several times as he paints. "The electronics affects the quality of light," he added. "So, to some extent you are depending on the quality of the electronic sensor in the camera, and I think that is interesting because the camera has changed the way we see things."

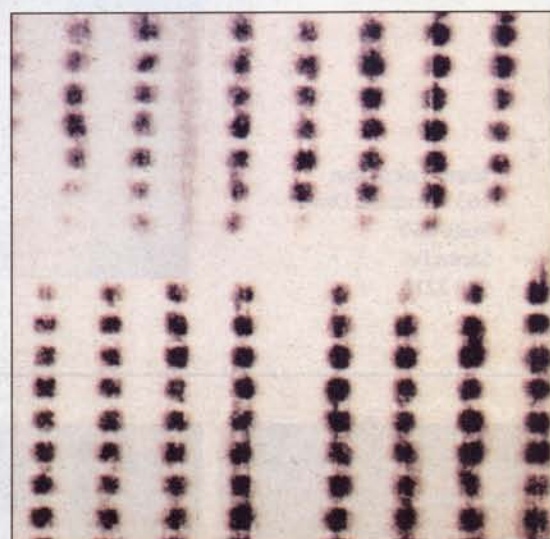
Even though he works out his compositions on a computer screen and paints the lines mechanically, Betts said, his paintings are shaped more by human judgment than by technology. "Out of each photograph I will pick a hundred slices," he explained. "Out of that hundred I might print a dozen, and out of that dozen I might paint one."

Jay Tracy has also invented a painting machine, which he uses to make abstractions composed of concentric circles. His paint is a chemical concoction known as Van Dyke brown, used in the early days of photography. While the artist and his machine are making the circles, the Van Dyke brown is invisible, but after a day of exposure to light, it develops and stabilizes.

"The large, circular drawings have an almost oral component to them," Tracy said. "There is a suggestion of the grooves on a vinyl record, the sound of a potter's tool dragging through the clay, and the cone of a speaker."

Tracy makes small drawings by exposing vintage fax paper — from the 1970s — to found objects that he has heated. "I look for things that can hold heat, and for the most part I don't touch the paper at all. You can think of the drawings as sunburns."

The smoky veils in Tony Evanko's drawings are Xerox toner the artist fixes to the paper with fumes from lacquer thinner. "I started doing



Jay Tracy: *Untitled 2287*, thermogenic drawing on vintage fax paper, 17 x 15 inches

these kinds of drawings several years ago with charcoal powder," he said, but thick, textured charcoal is near impossible to fix. Working with the fumes has drawbacks, but Evanko said he is careful not to poison himself.

Evanko's toner mists are contained within hard-edged geometric shapes he works out on a computer. "These are much more spontaneous than anything I've done in the past, but the hard edges reflect my need for some kind of control," he added. "The fascination I have with these pieces is that contrast between the rigid control of arriving at a shape and making a mask and the organic interior. In my mind they are holes cut into some kind of membrane, and you are looking through to some kind of organic world."

Phillis Ideal likes to pour paint — sometimes directly onto the canvas, but not always. She collects pools and squiggles of poured paint that she adds to paintings like bits of appliqué. "I'm not trying to imitate nature; it does fine by itself," Ideal said. "I usually work on five or six paintings at once, and they all kind of pop at the same time."

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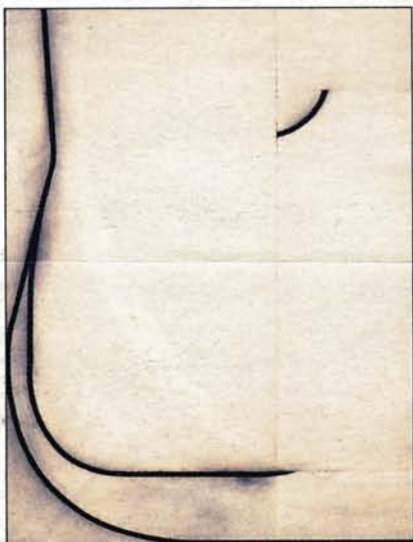
Addison, continued from Page 26

Ideal seems to like the word “pop.” She uses it to describe bold compositions that viewers can absorb at a glance and the inspiration she finds in everyday weirdness, like Ralph Lauren’s line of household paints or the Home Shopping Network.

Daniel Brice’s paintings and drawings don’t pop, they quietly seduce. His compositions are near-empty; most have few gently curving lines surrounded by large, almost-white expanses. In his drawings Brice can turn a simple charcoal smear into a luscious treat. “I make the work mainly for me,” Brice said. “I want to give myself an experience.”

The quiet beauty in Brice’s paintings developed slowly. “I’m a very physical person, so when I first began to paint, I was attracted to the expressionists and the idea of putting myself fully into the work,” Brice remembered. “I thought the work needed to reflect that with gouges and splashes. I realized later that I didn’t need the external marks to show that I worked through this thing.”

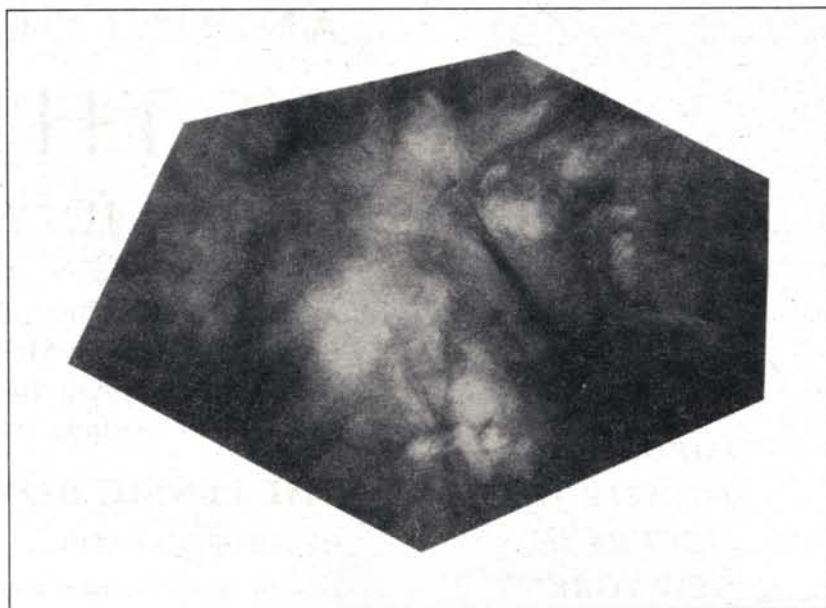
His slow work — adding and removing paint, sanding everything to a high finish — provides time for emotions to rise, Brice maintains. He adds lines that meander into the wrong places, and then spends hours or days refining and subtracting. “It’s not planned,” Brice said. “I think it is finished when it is almost telling a story. I find painting to be a mysterious act that I don’t understand.” ◀



Daniel Brice: *Untitled #2*, charcoal on paper, 40 x 30 inches

details

- ▼ *5 Angles on Abstraction*
- ▼ Opening reception 5-7 p.m.
Friday, June 30; through July 29
- ▼ Addison Arts, 209 Galisteo St.,
992-0704



Tony Evanko: *Aperture 21*, toner on paper, 22 x 30 inches