Bringing dark to light

Cathleen Palumbo's oils on view at Open Space

here's nothing as exciting, and a little dangerous, as finding your own voice. Whether anyone else likes it or not, you know deep in your bones you are finally

expressing your unique vision in this largely copycat world.

That's where artist and poet



"It's my pride and joy," she says about her "Faces"

series, some of which is on view at Open Space Gallery on Taos Plaza.

"It's where I found my own voice. I was sick and tired with how everywhere the media is saying 'this is how you should look, that's how you should look ...' and I said no, that is trying to take people away from their own individuality – and it affects everyone in their lives."

In 2009 Palumbo had just been laid off from her job and was in shock. With her world in a shambles and nothing left to lose, she sat herself down and said, "I'm going to pull these faces out of nowhere to see what is there.

"I literally sit at my easel, totally turning myself off and I'm pulling in and saying, 'OK, who wants to come through?'
And most importantly it's not about gender.

"What's fascinating is when people see the faces and they identify them as male or female. Some faces would be frightening, some would make the viewer laugh."

Titled numerically, "No. 25" was seen as a saintly figure to one viewer, some saw it as tragic. Palumbo had no absolute value to express, other than what the "image" presented to her.

Though not claiming to be specifically "psychic," she finds the Faces connection to her psyche uncanny. Her cousin bought a print of every single Face in the series and one original. His sister, unbe-



Courtesy photo

'Snow Tones,' oil on canvas by Cathleen Palumbo



Courtesy image

'Windows of the Soul,' oil on canvas by Cathleen Palumbo

knownst to him, bought a print of the one original he had bought, with neither knowing what the other was doing.

"Some of them got really crazy, because I wasn't going to hold back anything they presented. Like in 'No. 34,' I had no idea why I was putting these things on its head. And then later I saw a documentary on Polynesian people and they had these same things on the top of their heads.

"That kind of closes the circle. You can't quite explain it, but putting it out in

the public and being so amazed at what someone else sees. So many times you feel you're creating in a vacuum, when you've let go so much to allow yourself to express something." But she discovered that the artistic process also allows you to create something you don't understand.

Palumbo's last piece in the Faces series was done in 2014. She moved on from only depicting heads to full-figure imagery and also multidimensional imagery that pops in from her daily meditations. She has used a ladder, or elsewhere a window, in different works to depict Time, various kinds of time manifesting – or not – in two or more dimensions, with footprints stretching into the background, indicating an unknown path and being in and out of time in the same moment.

"Windows of the Soul" is a new painting and departure from earlier series in that there are three people depicted on an earthen foreground, surrounded by a yellow geometric amid an electric blue expanse – a new development at the time and perhaps indicative of "other" consciousnesses' contact.

"Just before moving to Taos (in summer 2016), I started adding more than one person." Hailing from a few years in El Rito, southwest of Taos County, the sensation seeking release was one she couldn't quite put her finger on, wondering how to translate this feeling into paint. Of late, she more often presents two, three or more figures in her pieces.

"There's big emotional content. I love color. One piece was created after a family blow up. It was very revealing about my new emotions that are hiding from me," she recalls. "I aspire to paint realistically but some part of me says, 'Uh uhh.'

"An artist is simply creating a picture of an experience with life, using images to reveal some unspoken awareness of the emotions," Palumbo writes in her book, "Enjoying Art." She notes too, that art "also speaks to the side of us that does not need to go, go, go, produce, produce, produce! Our world is full of tasks and lists of things to do. The humanity of our lives thirsts for beauty and creativity that is not part of the assembly line of production."

Open Space Gallery of Art and Fine Craft is located below The Gorge Restaurant on Taos Plaza. Hours are daily 10 a.m.-5 p.m. For more information, call (575) 758-1217 or see *openspacegallery.* com or cathleenpalumbo.blogspot.com.

Editor's note: *Tempo* just learned that Open Space Gallery will be closing Dec. 31, 2016. A feature article will follow in the Dec. 8 issue of Tempo.

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