



Works by Lydia Gasman, who died last month, show at Les Yeux du Monde

As it must, the show goes on

by : Andrew Cedermark

I went after last week's snowfall to Les Yeux du Monde, the gallery Lyn Warren runs on the property of her Albemarle County home. She met me in a Jeep at the mailbox at the bottom of her driveway, and shuttled me up the snow-covered path to the home she shares with husband Russ Warren, where the W.G. Clark-designed gallery, covered in rust, stands. I went to see for myself an exhibit Lyn had arranged, called "Philosophers and Painters," which features works by David Summers—a Renaissance expert at UVA and painter on the side, whose clever studies in light reference artists from Charles Wright to Caravaggio—but mostly the recent works of Lydia Gasman, a renowned Picasso scholar and popular professor of art history at UVA who died last month at the age of 84.

Contained in the exhibit is a series of 16 works that Gasman painted in 2009 alone, the last year of her life, half of which are called "Anthropomorphic Brushstrokes." True to these titles, Gasman's swirling abstractions suggest paint adrift in the wind as much as they do lines of the human form. At a 2000 opening she told Ruth Latter of the Daily Progress, "It is generally felt that while abstraction can convey things that cannot be put into words, it can be combined with representation that defines specific meanings." So Gasman's abstractions stand alongside suggestions, and in the form of cutouts from books and photographs, outright declarations.

Gasman's contributions to "Philosophers and Painters" are nonetheless ethereal. It makes sense for a painter whose central fascination was the sky, which even during Gasman's childhood was a place for angels to sing God's praises. Gasman was born in Romania and, like Picasso, survived bombings in World War II. She drew from these experiences, and from the writings of Walter Benjamin, the notion that the sky is the realm of warplanes and air strikes, a place not of redemption but of violence. Indeed, Summers wrote in a eulogy that Gasman "lived through some of the worst experiences of a horrible, murderous century, and I often thought that her fascination with Picasso was in large part an attempt to come to grips with that century and her experiences." In Gasman's final book, which she self-published, she translated Picasso's cryptic texts, a visual diary the artist kept during World War II. But unlike that work, Gasman's paintings have a way of feeling open. Warren sees in Gasman's work an attempt, frequent in modernist painting, to reach into a fourth dimension—the communal aspect that an artwork shares with its audience. "She was thinking of a heavenly afterlife," says Warren.

A memorial ceremony there brought out "her students and colleagues and hairdressers" from as far away as Buffalo, New York. At the service, Stephen Margulies of UVA Art Museums eulogized her with a poem: he wrote, "O Lydia, you knew evil three times but would not stop radiating."

Driving downhill, conversation turned to Warren's plans for the gallery. The next show will feature the works of 12 women, followed by an early spring exhibit with the works of Lincoln Perry.



Lydia Gasman, longtime professor of art history at UVA and renowned Picasso scholar, died last month at the age of 84. A show at Les Yeux du Monde, "Philosophers and Painters," shows a series of work from her final year.

Off the hook

The characters in John Grisham's thrillers tend to run through the legal ringer. No surprise that the Albemarle-based writer of legal thrillers was able to beat a libel lawsuit in a Denver court of appeals last week. A district attorney, state prosecutor and police officer from near Ada, Oklahoma, first sued Grisham in 2007. They were unhappy with their portrayals in Grisham's first-ever nonfiction book, *The Innocent Man*. The three lawmen helped send two innocent men to death row for more than a decade for the rape and murder of a cocktail waitress.

Three course meal

I heard from Marie Landragin, guitarist for local metallurgists Corsair, who told me that they'll be playing a record release party at the Southern on February 20 (see page 38 for a review). Also playing the show, Landragin said, will be Red Satellites, the band that pushes glam to its reasonable limits, who will also release an EP on the night of the show. Enough excitement, right?

No. After outgoing Feedback columnist Brendan Fitzgerald showed me how to bypass my spam filter, I found among the filth and grime a glistening jewel of a message from Drunk Tigers' principal songwriter Matt Bierce, with a new EP attached—which will also be released at the show. That's not one, not two, but three excellent local bands that will release EPs in one night. Not bad for a small town.

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