

Intelligencer Journal

A line has formed at Lancaster Arts Hotel

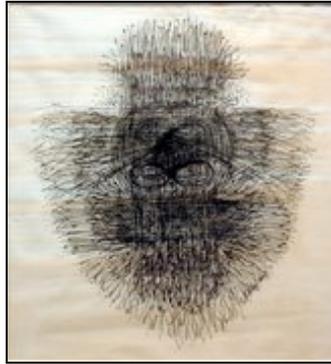
DETAILS

BY CARLA DI FONZO, Intelligencer Journal

Local artist Claire Giblin said it's easy to have a revelation -- once you stop trying to have one.

When she began her most recent body of work, "In Search of Harmony: Journey of the Line," Giblin looked for inspiration in many different places -- poetry, ancient philosophy and, of course, her own life.

"I kept searching for balance," she said. "And there can be a lot of angst when you're seeking balance, trying to force a particular outcome."



Sometimes angst makes for good art.

Emotionally complex pieces like "Always on My Mind," in which a female silhouette pieced together with calligraphy-style writing seems to buzz with the artist's own ruminations -- whatever they may be. Introspection comes at a price, the work seems to imply, and that price is a peace of mind.

"Snow on Cold Mountain," made from a substance called Diamont, wax and ink on paper, displays more of the mysterious calligraphy that only Giblin can read - - though she said the style is based on her impressions of Chinese and Japanese characters.

These coded words are uniform at the top and appear to unravel as they reach the bottom of the paper, like thoughts struggling to stay together.

"Around this time, I was creating a piece every night for about three months," Giblin said. "At the same time, I was searching for something, an understanding of the spiritual."

Prior to Giblin's "search," her life was undergoing a series of changes that were unexpected in many ways.

Several months ago, Giblin and fellow artist Ellen Slupe ran Pfenninger Gallery on North Prince Street. After four years of impressive shows and modest sales, the two decided to call it quits.

About that time, Giblin also was dealing with health issues that, thankfully, have been resolved since then.

"It was sad to close the gallery, but Ellen said she knew it was important in order for us to open the next chapter in our lives," Giblin said. "We opened with optimism and closed with optimism."

Shortly after closing the gallery, Giblin was asked to be part-time director of the Phillips Museum at Franklin & Marshall College.

Through all these events, the artist continued to produce work for her latest show. While some pieces reflect a certain kind of hyperactivity, "In Search of Harmony" charts Giblin's arrival toward artistic temperance.

As you peruse the exhibit, you begin to discover imagery that is more simple and clear -- while remaining abstract.

"Aztec" and "Inca" are ink-drawn shapes that evoke the ancient cultures for which they are named. You can approach these pieces the way you would Rorschach test inkblots and catch impressions of a loom, a mask or shield.

Finally, there are images like "One Continuous Line," in which the artist finds elegance with the simplicity of an unbroken line.

"I wandered through drawing after drawing, and could not stop until I had exhausted myself," Giblin said. "It was at that moment I discovered harmony in one continuous undulating line.

"I achieved the balance I was looking for, and the process seemed over," she said. "And it felt very gratifying."

At first, Giblin wondered how audiences would view this new batch of work.

"I usually work on a larger canvas, with certain ideas in mind," she said. "But soon I realized the new work was just right.

"Everything in my life just seems to be aligning," Giblin said. "Things that took a lot of effort before suddenly are happening effortlessly. Working hard to make things happen is good, but there's another component in life that's bigger than myself: fate and the spirituality behind it.

"When you understand that, you realize it's OK to let things happen on their own."

"In Search of Harmony: Journey of the Line," artwork by Claire Giblin, through Sept. 3, free, Lancaster Arts Hotel, 300 Harrisburg Ave., 299-3000.

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