

ART REVIEW

Art-making is among the careers of these profes

By JORGE S. ARANGO

Right now, there's an interesting phenomenon on the Maine art scene: three shows by people who came to their art after careers in non-artistic fields, some exhibited in spaces not on the usual art radar. A fourth is the work of a trained artist who, nevertheless, has had other careers.

The title "Between Now and Then" at the York Public Library (through Aug. 30), implies a span of time between past and pres

ent. For Linda Gerson, a psychotherapist who began taking art classes over two decades ago in Boston before moving to Wells (where she continued studies at Maine College of Art under the late Janet Manyan), it implies what transpired in her shift from representation to abstraction, but also the growth and self-discovery that can occur during the psychoanalytic process.

In fact, Gerson sees synchronies between her two practices, principally that they are both about adding and subtracting in



Photo courtesy of Eric Snyder for Beavits Frank Gallery
Carson Jackson, "Dance of the Untamed #8"

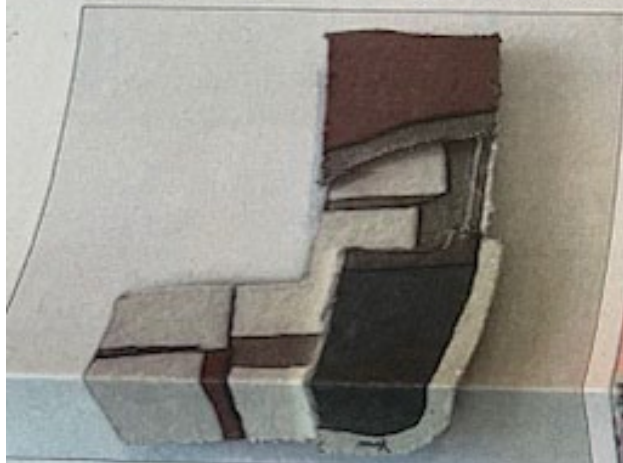


Photo courtesy of Ocean House Gallery
Mark Little, "Tool"



Photo courtesy of the artist
Linda Gerson, "Excavating a Life"



Amelie Michel

some way. In her art, this has to do with the physical accretion or removal of her materials (acrylic, ink, charcoal, graphite, pastel, collage) on the picture plane according to whatever state and/or mood she is experiencing at a given moment.

But psychology also has its additive and subtractive qualities – layers of ego and defensive coping structures being peeled away, for example, and the self-awareness and confidence that flood into those voids as understanding (of ourselves and the nature of reality) begins to dawn, eventually “adding” richness and nuance to life.

I first saw Gerson's work two years ago at the Maine Jewish Museum and commented on its reference to landscape, as well as her sense of lyricism. In this show, there are some that still hew more closely to landscape. But the movement toward abstraction, whether partial or total, has added more depth to her work. “Abstract Rocks,” for instance, is exactly that.

But we can also read the subject as *purely nonobjective forms in space. The woods are discernible in the optimistic larger format “Always Spring,”* but her strokes are loose enough to allow the simple perception of pure color and line.

Many represent ways in which she works through thoughts or feelings. A collage like “Excavating a Life” is pure abstraction. Made during a friend's dying process, it is a beautiful picture that palpably alludes to her conflicted state. It seems torn between loss (a variety of black voids), sweetness (a palette of rosy pinks and peaches), mercurial emotions (in black lines that loop up and down and fracture areas of the wood panel), and perhaps even a touch of magical thinking in a snippet of print that reads “Fairywill.”

Throughout, Gerson exhibits a lovely Matissean sense of color.