

Kim Sloane:

Color, Form and Story

By Tim Higgins

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Kim Sloane is trying something very different, and his current show, "Kim Sloane: Recent Work," in the Tomkins Gallery, Cedar Crest College, is a must-see for every local artist.

Sloane, 49, assistant professor of Art at Cedar Crest College, presents a relatively small exhibition consisting of seven paintings, two charcoal drawings and two colored pencil drawings in a show that marks Sloane's return to the medium of painting after nearly five years of devoting himself to drawing.

Like all paintings, these works are illusions of depth and movement. And at first glance, the paintings come across simply as extraordinary carnivals of light, full of drips and smears and seemingly random placements of color.

But to the novice who might say, "Anyone can do this," think again. There is more at work here than meets the eye.

These are dense, layered works, both in thought and technique. The surface of a Sloane painting is built with thick layers of directly applied paint. There are the obligatory drips and smears of the "action" painter, but Sloane carefully manipulates this surface tension and uses what appear to be haphazard mistakes as visual devices.

If one looks long enough it becomes apparent that his drips are not random, but there for a reason and provoking one to carefully "read" Sloane's latest paintings to see that there is a narrative involved.

"In my work at this time I want a story. Each painting is a response to a particular feeling and the painting is finished when I feel a presence is achieved that is an equivalent to the feeling."

Sloane says he drew inspiration for his paintings from Dante's "Divine Comedy," and visions of heaven and hell are perceived if one looks long enough.

"The poem contains such a richness of imagery, such a variety of emotions that I feel I could work from it for the rest of my time as painter," says Sloane. "The powerful metaphor of the poem, the journey and the turning from darkness toward the light is an analogy to the process of each painting."

Indeed, the illusion of the paintings' surface is of a maelstrom of beautiful, rich color. He assaults the viewer with flying comets of yellow/orange as they streak across the canvas, mixing with undulating lines of color that meld into carefully orchestrated mountains and plateaus deftly applied.

"Kim Sloane: Recent Work" continues through March 13 in the Tompkins Gallery, Cedar Crest College, 100 College Drive, Allentown. Gallery hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily.