German-Latin Harmony in Library Gallery

By Renee Shenk Staff Writer

A new exhibit in the library gallery showcases the work of a woman who united Latin and Germanic culture, creating a blend well worth the trip upstairs.

Maria Consuelo "Macon" Vargas Speiss was born in Cali, Columbia in 1950. She studies art in Hamburg, Germany and Vienna, Austria. Macon was married in Austria and settled there. Because of her travels, Macon brings a unique perspective from Latin America and Europe. This exhibit depicts the everyday struggles of immigrants that normal citizens are seldom aware of.

"She embraces reality and transforms it without drawing upon popular folklore...but rather replaces it with a sense of social responsibility," Dr. Pavel Stepanel said of Macon's work.

Macon uses dark tones to represent people withdrawing within themselves and adds yellow and reddish light for accents. A few pieces show anonymous figures that Stepanel said "are enveloped in a dim haze [and] sleep in a condition of physical and spiritual exhaustion in an environment lacking in any particular recognizable features."

Some pieces that stick out are Salsa Dance, Identity Loss, Integration of Second Generation, and In Prayer. Salsa Dance depicts a man and a woman dancing, but their facial expressions are hidden. This showed some of the culture of these immigrants, and that they did what they could to preserve their culture, rather than taking on the culture around them. This could also be a way for them to escape from the struggles of everyday life, a way to let out all their anxiety.

Identity seems very lonely. It was a painting of an old woman sitting in a chair, looking lost and bored.

Integration of Second Generation is simply an older man in the foreground and a young boy in the background. It was not about the action in the painting as much as the faces of the two men. The old man has a forlorn look on his face, but yet he has hope that the second generation will carry on the traditions of his times. The boy seems content with his surroundings because children usually adapt to new situations easier and faster than their elders.

In Prayer consists of a person sitting with their arms on their knees and their head in their hand, absorbed in total surrender to God. It might be a reminder that God is always there for us and that we need to take everything to Him in prayer.

Art makes people think. Some people go to art museums to get away from the busy world of traffic and work. Art galleries are places to be quiet and contemplate what an artist is trying to convey. Macon Vargas's work is well suited to the gallery atmosphere, quietly, fervently thoughtful.

Some oddities as oil and vinegar, red pepper on his salad. The paintings are not cheap, but surpassing expectations. The waiter was completely attentive and polite, surprising expectations. The food prices are not cheap, but reasonable. Being a moderately upscale restaurant, with a dress code in the casual/dressy echelon, the entries start in the nine-dollar range up to about sixteen dollars. The entries do come with salad and a side dish, and one can order appetizers and salads a la carte, but for those wanting a meal, expect to pay at least $10. The satisfaction of my experience was definitely worth the $15 (including tip) that was necessary. All in all, it was wonderful and delicious dining.