

Letting go

Three artists help redefine the term, 'eclectic'

By Tara Somerville

The hummingbird in "Heart Opening," a ceramic sculpture by Steven Gootgeld, stands like a timeless, majestic being.

Its beak, a porcupine quill, pierces the energy directly above it. Shiny black and gold wings spread wide, embracing what's before it. It is effervescent, yet connected to the earth.

Join Gootgeld and fellow artists Kristin Jones and Bill Hudson Friday (April 17) from 5-7 p.m. for "Melting Pot," an exhibition of expression and letting go at The Taos Gallery on 103 Paseo del Pueblo Norte.

"I've picked three artists that do completely different things," says gallery owner Jan Mellor. "When people come in, they can't make out who we are and I love that."

Nearly 20 years ago, following a year of ceremonies with shamans from all over the world, Gootgeld built a fire, beat on his drum and prayed for a way to express himself with his hands. Shortly after, he began experimenting with clay and a series of ceramic spirit animals emerged. Some have iridescent cloaks and carry sage. All invite contemplation and awakening. He says he has sold about 10,000 of these pieces.



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Artist reception

■ **When:** Friday (April 17), 5-7 p.m.

■ **Where:** The Taos Gallery, 103 Paseo del Pueblo Norte

■ **Admission:** Free admission, public invited

■ **Information:** (575) 758-3911

Eventually, Gootgeld branched out to create abstract sculptures, inspired by jazz music and existential and spiritual themes. "Angels Among Us" is a solid, royal blue structure sur-



Courtesy photo

"Ice on the Rio," painting by Bill Hudson

rounded by a white ceramic web, embedded intermittently with brilliant pastel orbs. "This piece represents 13 angels in my life, most of who are incarnate. It pays homage to the network of angels or helpers we all have," says Gootgeld.

His sculptures are fired in the kiln up to five times to achieve the impeccable quality of glaze. Sections of several pieces are glazed with 14K gold. To achieve this, he mixes finely ground gold with thick oil. During the firing, the oil burns off and the gold settles into a smooth, shiny film on the sculpture.

The first time he exhibited an abstract work was in 2001, at Taos Invites Taos Fall Arts show, and his piece "Plan-et" won best of sculpture.

Kristin Jones' paintings present raw emotion with vibrant colors, and images both stark and whimsical. Paintings in the series, "My Life in Red," have rubber-stamped



Ceramic sculpture by Steven Gootgeld titled "Spiral Sun"

words alongside representational imagery and the result is visceral and accessible, like a peek into someone's journal.

A Rotweiler-mix and a green-eyed cat gaze longingly from a canvas which also reads, "How could I ever be lonely?"

"That one was inspired by a conversation I had about how sharing a bed with your pets might

be better than sharing a bed with people," says Jones, smiling.

An underground comic book-like essence pervades much of her work. "Conversations with Myself" depicts a girl reclining in the moonlit sagebrush. The raven perched on her head peers down into her wine glass. A bunny sits on her knees. "I've always been interested in symbols and how they represent the same things in different cultures and religious beliefs. I play with them to create my own story," she says.

Bill Hudson began painting seriously two years ago, after 34 years practicing law. His impressionist Southwest landscapes are a celebration of his passion. "In Taos, every degree of the compass is something eye-popping, so it is continuously speaking to me," he says.

"Ice on the Rio" is a balance of heaven and earth. Islands of clouds waft above the dusted desert land, which has generously cracked open to make room for chilly waters. "On the trail to Williams Lake" is a gaze into the belly of the woods, where some trees thrive and others have fallen into the path of a delicate stream.

"When you're out in nature, there's an energy exchange that happens and it goes into the work," he says.

"I love being in a show where the work is so different than what I'm doing," he said. "At first I was like, 'Oh, that's just what Taos needs is another landscape artist.' But then I thought, 'That's just an excuse not to give full voice to the music that's inside me.' We're all creators, each of us just has a different way of expressing it."

The show continues through April 30. For more information, call the gallery at (575) 758-3911.