

STYLE | ARTS

BY SU BYRON

Y Not Women?

If you're looking for artistic insight, look no further than artinsight-sarasota. This area-based artists' group offers a rare combination of technique, vision and honesty — as this month's exhibition at The Studio at Gulf and Pine in Anna Maria proves again. "Y Not Women?" tackles the role of the woman artist unflinchingly. But don't expect polemics in paint. Ranging from Bettina Sego's lyrical meditations in metallic paints and glass, to Janet Mishner's introspective assemblages, to the abstractions of Gail Rubinfeld and Susan von Gries, the art on display isn't trying to make a point — it's simply beautiful. Aesthetics aside, framed quotations about the role of women artists form an ironic subtext. (Hans Hoffman's backhanded compliment to Lee Krasner, "This is so good, you wouldn't know it was painted by a woman," is included.) All we can say is, "ouch!" As von Gries notes, "Artists should be judged by their work, not their gender — period. That's not the way it is. We're simply asking why, and offering our homage to women artists throughout history." Oct. 7-26; artists' reception is Oct. 15, 5 to 7 p.m.; lecture by Kevin Costello, Oct. 15, 3 p.m.; 10101 Gulf Drive, Anna Maria Island; 778-1906; www.artinsight-sarasota.com.

Collaboration continues



PHOTO BY PETER HALLWARD
Colin Dunne / Out of Time

The 2011 Ringling International Arts Festival, a collaboration between the Ringling Museum and the Baryshnikov Arts Center, features eight core productions of dance, music and theater by cutting-edge performing arts troupes. Their art comes in many flavors. The Asphalt Orchestra displays the mad skills of a renegade marching band; Doug Elkins & Friends leap into a joyous dance interpretation of Rodgers and Hammerstein; a quartet of virtuoso pianists tackle the breathtaking complexities of Carl Czerny's Quatuor Concertant; Colin Dunne burns up the stage with Irish step dance; and The Wooster Group takes audiences on a soaring re-imagining of a Shakespearean "Hamlet" — with a nod to Richard Burton along the way. Family Fun-fests, Jazz Sunsets, a Sunday sARTée Soiree

and other daily programs happen throughout the festival. For a complete schedule, go to www.ringlingartsfestival.org. Oct. 11-16. The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, 5401 Bay Shore Road, Sarasota and FSU Center for the Performing Arts, 5555 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota. Tickets \$20-\$50; opening night: \$150; 359-5700.

Young butterfly

Puccini's heartrending tale of love, honor and betrayal in Meiji-era Japan, "Madama Butterfly," returns to Sarasota Opera this month. In brief, a young geisha, "Butterfly," falls for a charming but hard-hearted American naval officer who callously buys her as his "temporary wife." After the officer professes his love and impregnates her, Butterfly assumes their relationship is more permanent. But it's not — and we guarantee there won't be a dry eye in the house. Puccini's opera offers a stinging critique of the patronizing attitudes of colonialism. It's a different world now, but the human heart remains the same. More than 100 years after its first performance, Puccini's masterpiece has lost none of its transcendent power. Oct. 28-Nov. 15; Sarasota Opera House, 61 N. Pineapple Ave., Sarasota; tickets: \$19 and up; 366-8450; www.sarasotaopera.org.

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Meg Pierce Artist

Meg Pierce earned a master's degree in art and art education at Columbia University, and a master's of fine art in painting from the Pratt Institute. These days, Pierce uses the forms of paths, grids, mandalas, maps and mazes to create painstakingly complex and detailed mixed-media work. A member of the Florida Artists Group, Women Contemporary Artists, the Arts and Cultural Alliance of Sarasota and Towles Court Art Association, Pierce was the recipient of the 2010 John Ringling Towers Visual Artist Award. Her work can be seen at the Meg Pierce Studio in Towles Court and at www.meg-pierce.com. For more information, call 266-7318.

How do you describe your art?

I create complex, abstract, symmetrical, patterned and layered paintings using vintage and handmade cloth and embellishments, such as pins or sequins.

What media and materials do you use?

I use vintage clothing, bits of lace and threads. I recently added sequins and metallic trims to works using Indian fabrics. These are all layered with acrylic mediums and glazes.

Tell us about your latest artistic direction.

In my most recent work, I've opened myself up to the possibilities of layering beyond symmetry. I've also been working with photography, found objects and fiber. These can all be vehicles of memory, which is one thing I try to evoke in my art.

How is your art evocative of memory?

One's inner life is constructed, year by year, from many levels of experience and feeling. This construction of memory becomes our center, and we fight to defend that center! But when we don't defend it and simply see it for what it is, interesting things happen. As we move through our personal history, our memories disappear and reemerge. I've made this web of memory the subject of my work.

Your art sounds like a form of meditation.

Yes, it can be. The repetition, the point and counterpoint of doing my art, is both mindful and peaceful. I think viewers can feel it.