Famliar Faces

Stewart Goldman reflects friendships in portraits

REVIEW BY LISA BAGGERMAN

You may recognize many of the people featured in Stewart Goldman's *Cincinnati Portraits* exhibit at the Toni LaBoiteaux Gallery in O'Bryonville, which consists of inspired renderings of people known in the local arts community. With this collection of portraits, Goldman provides a window to his world — friends, family and artistic colleagues — through his brush.

"Maureen Bloomfield" by Stewart Goldman in *Cincinnati Portraits*

Many common motifs connect Goldman's paintings. First, each painting is rendered in a consistent size — 12 by 15 inches. Another constant is Goldman's use of vibrant color to render the portraits. Bright reds, blues, yellows and greens render the features and skin tone of the subjects, clearly hinting at the vibrant soul within. In almost every case, the subject's eyes are the focus, rendered with the greatest amount of detail. From this focal point, the details of the face and background fall into place, in broad, sketchy brushstrokes.

Many of the portraits feature people captured deep in thought, not posed. In "Merri Gaither Smith," Goldman shows her in a perfectly natural, pensive pose. Every feature and characteristic of her face is re-created with jerky strokes of her dark skin tone and bright colors. As with the other paintings, her eyes are the focus. The background is done with shorter, sketchier strokes.

The portraits do more than simply show the physical attributes of their subjects. They principally strive to capture the character within. In "Maureen Bloomfield," Goldman captures the energy and pensive nature of this woman, frozen in a thoughtful glance. There is great detail revealed in the lines of her face, hastily created with a loose brush. Her curly, full hair fuses into the background, becoming a part of the backdrop.

Most of the paintings featured are rendered with a light hand and a minimum of paint. In "Annika Goldman," more than half of the painting is actually raw canvas. For her long hair and blue eyes, Goldman uses strong, impactful colors to suggest form and outline. By using the paint so sparingly in this painting, the woman's face seems to emerge from the canvas itself.

But in "Jean Feinberg," the canvas doesn't peek through as it does in many of the others — Goldman has gone much heavier on the paint. The female subject has a soulful look, her dark hair in dark purples and bright blue. Broad, rough brushstrokes in yellow, orange and pink define the features and the skin. The background this time is layers of color, the most predominant of which is orange.

In each of his paintings, Goldman plays with the prominence the face takes on the canvas. In "Jessica Baron," her face with striking green eyes usurps the canvas. The suggestion of her hair is done loosely with crude strokes of varying intensity. Her flesh tones are almost psychedelic, in orange and yellow, with a hint of green echoed under an eye, reflecting the eye color.

In "Phillip Long," Goldman works predominantly from an extremely warm palette of reds, yellows and oranges, all vibrant and intense. This strong colors of the fiery portrait are offset by cooler accents of green and blue used sparingly to define different features.

Goldman goes even farther with the sketchy quality of painting in certain portraits. In "Richard Weiland," he uses a light, dry brush to paint muted colors. The sketchy lines appear haphazardly as they pull together the center of interest — the gentleman's face. More random lines pull together the background, lending the painting a more random, illogical feeling than some of the others featured in this show.

These portraits together obviously reflect Goldman's own interpretations of friendships and inspirations. But you don't have to know the subjects and their artistic contributions to appreciate this show. Instead, you can appreciate them for what they are — unique renderings of excellent portraiture.

THE TONI LABOITEAUX GALLERY features [illegible] through July 18.