

Teruko Wilde

Total Arts Gallery, July 13-August 5

SINCE MOVING to Taos, NM, over three decades ago, artist Teruko Wilde has explored nature's beauty through a variety of styles and themes in her work. In more than 30 new oil paintings on view at Total Arts Gallery this month, Wilde continues to glean inspiration from nature and the deeper, personal questions it can prompt, but her style has

visibly shifted to abstraction. The show, titled *The Search for That Secret Place*, opens on Friday, July 13, with an artist's reception at 5 p.m. "I picked that date on purpose," laughs the artist. "Here in Taos, gallery shows usually open on Saturday night, but I saw Friday the 13th as an opportunity to change things. People often frown about that date, but I'm go-

ing to change it to a happy situation."

In many respects, the show is a milestone for Wilde, who says her style tends to shift every decade or so. "This is going to be my last big change to challenge myself, so it's a big deal," she adds. Early on in her career, the artist painted in a more "technically refined" style with watercolors and pastels, and she has worked



The Search for That Secret Place: 13, oil, 24 x 30.



The Search for That Secret Place: 03, oil, 40 x 40.

in a range of genres, including figurative, still life, and landscape. After moving to New Mexico in 1986, the studio painter transitioned to oils as she embarked on a series of large skyscapes that mirrored the dramatic views around her new home. Eventually, she moved on to depicting trees, gradually acquiring a more “primitive” style inspired by the graphic imagery of Van Gogh and Gauguin. “Now I’m getting into complete abstraction, and it’s neither primitive nor sophisticated,” says Wilde.

The artist acknowledges that her new style might surprise people who are familiar with her earlier, more representational portrayals of northern New Mexico’s landscapes. But Wilde, who grew up in a mountainous area of Japan, says her paintings are still rooted in her lifelong

love for nature. In her new works, viewers can find shapes and colors that suggest luminous fall foliage, twisting tree branches, snowy peaks, and the sky. “I didn’t plan to put mountains, trees, and forests in my paintings,” she says, “but I may subconsciously have wanted people to relate to something in them.”

Throughout her works, Wilde applied broad swathes of paint using thick brushes, palette knives, and a spatula. “I don’t want to go back over and over a painting,” she says of her fresh, unfussy approach. “I want to make a statement with one big stroke.” In many pieces, the artist’s crisp imagery is amplified by an emotive palette of spicy reds, yellows, and oranges, and in other works, she incorporates bright purples, blues, and greens. A few pieces feature a softer

palette of buttery yellow, pink, and lilac hues. “My purpose for painting is more about an emotional journey,” explains Wilde. “I’m not so concerned with technical skill, because I have done that for over 45 years. My abstract paintings might not seem like much to people who like very tight work, but hopefully viewers will see that there is deeper meaning in what I’m doing.” —*Kim Agricola*

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