

A&E

Artbreak

Five in a day

Sangre de Cristo Arts Center opens five winter art exhibits

by John Hazlehurst

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"Red Willow and Taos Mountain" by Gene Kloss.

Here's a lead I've written about five times before: "The new shows at Pueblo's Sangre de Cristo Arts Center are amazing and wonderful and not to be missed." Might as well write the same opener here, because, once again, Curator Jina Pierce and her staff have achieved miracles.

Consider this: Operating on a minuscule budget, in a small, deeply traditional city, the Sangre de Cristo puts every similar institution in the Rocky Mountain West to shame. This month will see the opening of no less than five shows (six, if you include the annual holiday gift gallery!), all very different, all entirely pleasing.

Let's start with *Apron Chronicles: A Patchwork of American Recollections*, a collaborative project between the writer EllynAnne Geisel and the photographer Kristina Loggia. A few years ago, Geisel, who had collected "a clothes basket full of old aprons," began to think about aprons and the lives and stories woven around them. That idea eventually came to fruition as *Apron Chronicles*, a traveling exhibit comprising photographs, text in story form, and 200 vintage aprons. It's a resonant and beautiful idea; and, thanks largely to Kristina Loggia's extraordinary photographs, it's a brilliant exhibition.

Loggia, a war photographer until marriage and motherhood took her from the world's battle zones, says that she was "raised in a home where an apron equaled servitude." Intrigued nevertheless by Geisel's project, she offered to photograph the storytellers.

Loggia's photographs compose one of the most moving, beautiful and powerful series of portraits that any of us will ever see. Most of the photos are of women, who are sometimes alone in their kitchens/living rooms, sometimes surrounded by family. Most of them are older women in their 60s, 70s, 80s and beyond.

These are people who, as a class, are mostly invisible, taken for granted, their lives ignored, their stories untold.

Like Dorothea Lange's photographs of Depression-era Americans, Loggia's work is simple and transparent. The photographs, mostly Cibachrome prints shot with a 4-inch-by-5-inch camera, are masterfully composed and beautifully printed. And all this technical brilliance has a purpose: to show us the radiant beauty of the photographer's subjects. You will not just be moved by this work; you will be overwhelmed.

In an adjacent lower level gallery, the work of the minimalist artists/collaborators Eric Tillinghast and Eliot Norquist is on display. The work is quiet, tranquil and slightly mysterious. It couldn't be simpler -- on the gallery walls, Tillinghast's work consists of circles -- in copper, in steel, in graphite. And on the gallery floor, Norquist has paired smooth, timeworn stones with welded steel rectangular forms. Taken individually, the artworks seem inconsequential and aimless. But as arranged in the gallery, they're as luminous, concentrated and meditative as a classic Japanese garden. Go, if you can, on a weekday afternoon -- the work is best experienced in solitude, or with a close friend.

Upstairs, Boulder artist Sally Elliott's work is complex, riotous and emotional. Elliott's imagery is as overgrown and comforting as an ancient walled garden, allusive, indirect and archetypal. She's been creating art, mostly in Colorado, for close to 40 years and is clearly one of the very best in our state. Think Dave Yust, think Clark Richert, think Jeffrey Keith -- these are her peers. And yet, her work is still affordable -- thousands less than her male counterparts. "The Rose-Eyed Madonna," gouache on paper, is a big, generous, wonderful painting, one that I supposed would be priced at around 30 grand. It's not even a tenth of that -- so you'd better snap it up, unless I win the lottery and get there first ...

The Sangre de Cristo has the definitive collection of the works of Gene Kloss, arguably the greatest printmaker of the American West. Several dozen works from the museum's collection are on

display in the King Gallery -- a treat for anyone who loves historic Western art. Happily, the show includes some of Kloss' greatest images, including the spectacular "High in the Rockies." This is one of the iconic American prints, as good as, say, George Elbert Burr's "Old Cedar, Ash Fork, Arizona" or Childe Hassam's "Lion Gardiner House."

On the third floor, Jan Myer's cheerful pastel landscapes line the entrance hall. Myer's work -- skilled, unpretentious, accessible -- is both popular and good. Art snobs might call it kitschy and derivative, but, if you owned one of her pieces, you'd smile every time you glanced at it.

And finally, the Sangre's annual gift gallery, the Own Your Own Art Show and Sale, is worth mentioning, if only because it's so much better than most similar shows or events. There's some seriously good art (would you believe half a dozen Louis Recchias?), some great ceramics and some fine jewelry, and it's all eminently affordable (as in, between \$50 and \$200).

So here's your itinerary: Leave Colorado Springs at 10 a.m. Browse the galleries at the Sangre from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Do your holiday shopping at the gift gallery from 12:30 to 1 p.m. Then, lunch at one of the dozen cool places in Pueblo (maybe Gus's, the oldest, most atmospheric bar in southern Colorado, or the Rio Bistro, or the Steel City Diner, or ...). Then back to Colorado Springs -- and make sure you have a designated driver.



"Ada" from *Apron Chronicles: A Patchwork of American Recollections* by photographer Kristina Loggia.

capsule

Circles and Square:
Eric Tillinghast and
Eliot Norquist

Seasons in Colorado and
New Mexico: Selections
from the Gene Kloss
Collection

Apron Chronicles:
Kristina Loggia and
EllynAnne Geisel

Objects of Personal
Significance: Sally Elliott

Works by Jan Myers

Own your Own Art Show
and Sale (through
Dec. 30)

Sangre de Cristo
Arts Center
210 N. Santa Fe Ave.,
Pueblo
Galleries open Tuesday
through Saturday
11 a.m. to 4 p.m.
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www.sdc-arts.org