

LewAllen Exhibits Boast Daring, Sophisticated Images

The LewAllen Gallery, 225 Galisteo St., is representing Santa Fe textile artist Ramona Sakiestewa. Also on exhibit are new works by five glass artists. Both shows are up through April 27. LewAllen is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. (988-5387.)

"Laughter is Prayer," featuring paintings on found surfaces by the late Naomi Polk, are on exhibit through April 30 at the Leslie Muth Gallery, 225 E. De Vargas St. Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. (989-4620.)

A continuing exhibit of silver jewelry by Stephen Fox is on display at 21st Century Fox, 217 W. Water St. Open every day from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. (983-2002.)

The LewAllen Gallery often assembles an eclectic mix of artists, unrelated by theme or media. But usually these artists have wit, daring or elegance as key elements in their work. This current untitled show upholds that tradition.

Ramona Sakiestewa's textiles are rooted in pueblo weaving techniques but bear characteristics common to tapestries the world over; fine yarns tightly woven in precise patterns with elegant sophistication.

Her patterns echo her Southwestern environment and Native American heritage and are joined by the voices of modernist architects and artists. For years there was no hint of texture in her weavings. Her emphasis was on hard-edged color.

Sakiestewa's newest works are evolving from a recent visit to Japan. Now, knubby yarns are showing up, adding physical texture that appeals to the tactile senses. The edges of her colors are often serrated, uneven like the path of life, adding visual texture to her



"Healing," 1991, cast glass by Janusz Walentynowicz, from an exhibit of five glass artists at the LewAllen Gallery.

COURTESY LEWALLEN GALLERY

work. Her patterns are becoming poetic, suggesting trees and Oriental costumes. And the tendency her weavings have always had to ripple against the wall now enhances her softened approach.

These developments give new life to Sakiestewa's tapestries, making them more natural, letting her private thoughts come more into the open.

Four of the glass artists also on exhibit at LewAllen blow forms that boast size, tradition and the sheer

exuberance of working glass.

The fifth, Janusz Walentynowicz, casts figures that reveal the rites of passage from boyhood to manhood.

Self-portraits lie behind layers of crystal deliberately cracked and polluted with trash as if they were winter street puddles where the flotsam of life has collected and been frozen. A young boy's cherished innocence and a man's innocence unhappily lost, family and social history are all reviewed in Walentynowicz's images.

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The stories behind the paintings of the late Naomi Polk, on exhibit at the Leslie Muth Gallery, are fascinating.

Born in Houston on July 2, 1892, Polk was the granddaughter of a freed slave who told her stories about the old life in Africa.

Polk never forgave her mother for forcing her to quit school in the sixth grade to help raise her siblings. She loved learning, and she wrote poetry and painted through-



Insight

PAMELA J. TARCHINSKI

time at age 75, neither she nor her new husband were willing to give up their dogs or houses, so they divorced.

Some of these conflicts and dilemmas are retold in Polk's pencil and paint pictures done on acoustical tile. Dogs chase cats, cats chase birds, birds dive-bomb intruding cats. The features of each animal are articulated carefully to show their feelings and reactions.

"Life is a lonesome road," Polk once said. Perhaps her picture of a cowboy riding off into the mountains, leaving behind a forlorn-looking lady holding a heart-shaped handbag, illustrates that philosophy. ■ ■ ■

At 21st Century Fox, described by founder Stephen Fox as "one guy's staggeringly huge collection of all kinds of things," jewelry of his own design has been added to the mix.

Fox recently came into possession of a set of jeweler's stamps made in the 1930s. Each one bears a different miniature design or picture which Fox uses like hieroglyphics to create fanciful scenes of the West on silver bands.

Once the rage, such stamps went out of fashion and are now used rarely. Fox is resurrecting them in part because he says he feels it's unfair that "there are styles that are no longer used just because they are not popular."

out her life.

She turned entrepreneur, importing a line of cosmetics specially made up North for Black women and selling them to her Houston neighbors. Later, she invented secret formula bug poisons and sold them to customers who swore by them.

But the arts were Polk's life work. When all her output was destroyed in a fire in 1961, she sat down to recreate everything she lost.

When Polk married for a third