

Bill Van Siclen, Providence Journal, January 2011

**IN THE GALLERIES - 'Opposites attract' at Providence show | in the galleries
BILL VAN SICLEN**

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After a post-holiday lull, the Providence art scene is getting back into gear with new shows at the Lenore Gray Gallery, the AS220 Project Space and other venues.

At Lenore Gray, painters **Elise** Ansel and Christi Harris are giving new meaning to the phrase "opposites attract," with Ansel showing a group of lushly painted abstractions that slyly evoke Old Master paintings and Harris contributing a series of small, finely detailed studies of that all-American institution: the discount food mart.

The result is a show that manages to encompass a wide range of human experience - everything from Rembrandt and Rubens to Coke and Pepsi - without breaking a sweat.

Of the two artists, Ansel is probably the easiest to like. That's especially true in the dreary depths of January, when her often radiant colors - lush reds, blues and green played off against darker browns and grays - are enough to raise the gallery's temperatures by several degrees.

Still, it's Ansel's use of Old Master painting as a stepping stone for her own visual improvisations (in much the same way that a jazz musician might riff off a classical melody) that really sets her work apart.

A work called "Deposition," for example, clearly evokes the look and feel of a traditional Crucifixion scene, with a pale swirl of pink suggesting Christ's body and alternating patches of light and dark standing in for the usual crowd of mourners and onlookers. (Of course, it also helps if you know that scenes portraying Christ's descent from the Cross are often referred to as "Depositions.")

On a lighter note, a painting called "Fools Rush In" features a conga line of pinkish-white smudges outlined against a luminous green background. The result suggests an abstract homage to one of Rubens's pastoral scenes - the kind with plump nudes cavorting in a grassy field.

HARRIS, on the other hand, is fascinated by a peculiarly American kind of landscape - the kind formed by acres of cling-wrapped, fluorescent-lit consumer goods and products.

In the aptly named "Bounty and Charmin," two neatly stacked piles of paper products sit side by side, forming a kind of Pop Art monument.

In "Pepsi and Beef," meanwhile, a supermarket meat case casts an eerie glow on a pile of jumbo-size soda bottles.

In both cases, Harris's keen attention to detail lifts these scenes out of the ordinary and turns them into something that borders on the hallucinatory.

Through Jan. 26 at the Lenore Gray Gallery, 15 Meeting St., Providence. Hours:
Mon.-Fri. 10-4 and by appt. Contact: (401) 274-3900.