



Carthage 2008-2010, acrylic on canvas, 54" x 66" by Richard D. Phipps

Led by a Lyrical Impulse

By Kerry Methner / CASA

INTRICATE PAINTINGS INFUSED with primary colors, and all shades between, will open in an exhibit at the University of California Santa Barbara's College of Creative Studies Gallery on Friday, July 8th with an artist reception from 5 to 7pm.

Comprised of work by career artist and teacher Richard D. Phipps, the paintings were curated by UCSB's Dan Connally. The show, which runs through August 27th is a selection from Phipps' recent work. Many are large, and most painted at his Los Osos studio.



Richard D. Phipps

"I've come to appreciate that painting is for grown-ups, not kids," Phipps shared in a telephone interview. "It used to be said to graduate students, 'Don't plan on anything until at least ten years after you graduate. If you're still painting then, maybe you're a painter.' Painting as an art form matures. As the artist grows it gets richer, deeper. I find myself paying closer attention to details. I prefer work by older artists who have been around, who offer attention to detail that is manifested in their work."

A lifelong teacher, in addition to being a painter, this native of Los Angeles has traveled the world, studying the greats, working with contemporaries, and in general, trying "to learn from the examples set by artists older than me." A few of those include Rico Lebrun, Howard Warshaw, and John Nevin, a WWII vet. "They have a very different look at the world," he explained.

Phipps acknowledges that his travels and opportunities to meet and work with gifted artists would not be easy for his students to duplicate. "I've been fortunate to meet some very interesting people, and enjoyed the benefits... I've been ultimately lucky."

But that wasn't how he felt when as a child he

began his life of painting. During World War II, when he was three or four, he recalled, "My aunt was a school teacher, and from time to time she could bring home newsprint and paint. My first experience was my frustration trying to mix a descent red with the materials that were supplied to kids in public schools."

Later of course Phipps learned that red is a primary color and can't be mixed. But that experience had an impact. He relates that since then his work has had a focus on primary colors and materials, a very practical approach, testing the limits of materials, and working within those parameters.

"Painting is what I do; it's who I am. It's curiosity; It's what I am capable of," he explained of his process. For him it's not about creating meaning, it is about seeing, paying attention to detail. The artist isn't a guide, the artist is a set of eyes, but not the only set.

Along the way Phipps has earned a BA with honors from UCSB in 1964 and MFA from UCSB in 1968. He has taught at the UCSB College of Creative Studies, SBCC Adult Ed, and is currently teaching at Cuesta College.

He describes his paintings as being "driven by a deeply expressive and often lyrical impulse," in his artist statement. "I have need of poetic ambiguity and have no intent that a painting convey meaning. If I can get rid of what is emotionally extraneous in a painting's content, I feel that emotion will inevitably be supplied by the attentive viewer."

While Phipps doesn't offer any hint of retiring from his lifelong passion for painting, when asked "What's next?" his answer makes space for the sense of ambiguity he values. "It's simple. I'm grateful to see another sunrise. It's as simple as that and it's true. If there's a tomorrow for me, I'm grateful... There's no certainty about it."



Untitled 2010, acrylic on canvas 66" x 54" by Richard D. Phipps

The Gallery is open M-F 10-5 and by appt weekends. Call 893-2364 for information or visit the artist's website at www.richardphippartist.com