

John Jones Under the Lens

by C.A. Whittemore

One of the most fun and exciting aspects of reporting on art in our community are the surprises, such as realizing that "Little John," the kind, amiable, good-natured bartender at O. Henry's, is John Jones, the artist. What a wonderful discovery! Here was someone I had been acquainted with for four years, and I was about to be introduced to a whole other aspect of his life.

One of the earliest influences on Jones' art were two gifts he received from his parents: a telescope and a microscope. Magnifying those tiny dots of light in the sky into planets with textured surfaces, and swamp water into tiny daphnia and water fleas swimming in a petri dish, these tools facilitated and spurred on Jones' already existing fascination with what you can't see: the mysteries of life. This new telescopic/microscopic world prompted Jones to want to create images in art which express that which cannot be seen.

When Jones was in high school, he found the medium in which to create: watercolors. He caught the watercolor

teacher's passion for this medium. She took Jones under her wing, and became his friend and mentor. During high school, Jones received honors and recognition for his work, and was given a scholarship to study art. In the summer, Jones got a job in an ad agency in Chicago. The agency encouraged Jones to stay and he accepted, leaving art school behind.

During this time, Jones "came out." Shortly thereafter, Jones decided to dedicate his time and energies to the Gay Liberation Movement. As part of his work in the movement in the late 60's, he helped put together the first gay political newsletter in Chicago. He was in charge of art, which included designing the logo. During this period of his life, Jones concentrated his energies on commercial art and political action, leaving his camel hair brushes dormant. He was also a volunteer on the Chicago Gay Switchboard.

Even though Jones enjoyed the city life, he started to yearn to be in a more rural setting. Through the *Mother Earth News*, Jones met several other men who had the same goal, and, in 1980, they started Running Water, a rural collective in the mountains of WNC. Due to lack of available employment, Jones only participated in the collective for a year.



In 1985 Jones got back into his personal art. Although he had an affinity for water colors, he felt that the medium was too limiting, so he chose acrylics. Taking his influences and inspiration from Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), who perceived form as content, thereby anticipating the trends of abstraction and expressionism; and W.H. Stevens (contemporary, works on exhibit in Blue Spiral I), Jones decided to learn the medium through abstraction.

Jones' creations are birthed from purposeful design. "When I am painting," says Jones, "I have a person or an idea that I am dedicated to. I try to do that in colors and form." Jones' abstract acrylic titled "Triple Scorpio #2" is an excellent example of this approach. Astrologically speaking, to be a triple scorpio you must have scorpio in both your sun and moon, as well as a scorpio ascendent. Triple scorpio is an intense sign. Two people who are close to Jones are triple scorpions, and he had them in mind when he conceived this work. Through the balance of space, forms and color transitions, Jones was able to create intensity.

To create a 3-dimensional space in which the geometric symbols could move, Jones worked from a light wash to a dark wash. This draws the viewer's eyes in and out of the center of the painting, which contains most of the movement.

Next, Jones chose specific geometric symbols which help to convey the meaning. These symbols are 1) a triangle, which represents the relationship of peoplekind to the creative spirit; 2) a square, which represents the human race; and 3) a circle, which represents creative force. Jones also created his own geometric symbol, a three-pointed star, which represents energy. In the center of the painting there is an archway through which all of the geometric symbols move into the light. Since scorpio is an autumn sign, Jones chose a color scheme which consists predominantly of washes of red, orange, brown, and October sky blue. Jones' three-dimensional space, combined with his symbolic geometry and color choices, creates intensity.

The other two abstract acrylics by Jones which are on display at Blue Spiral I are "Distant World" and "Jazz." "Distant World" was inspired by the image of the goddess Diana. It is a dreamy, visionary piece composed of circles, swirls and mountains, and its primary colors are blues and pastels. "Jazz" started as "a great big doodle," Jones said. While listening to contemporary jazz, Jones was inspired to depict the music in art form. "I don't sing or play an instrument," said Jones, "but I can make a painting that makes me think of music." Just as contemporary jazz is a combination of tonal and abstract sounds, Jones' "Jazz" combines short, obtuse atonal angles with warm, familiar harmonic tones.

Jones has been invited to exhibit his work on a regular basis in the gallery. He enjoys expressing himself and working with acrylics, and plans to continue creating in this medium.

When asked why he does what he does, Jones answered, "There is a zen to my art, that's what I do to get in touch with the spiritual part of me."

You can view John Jones' works at the Blue Spiral I, Mon.-Sat. from 11 AM to 5 PM. v

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of the gay/lesbian community. Kisha feels very close and interwoven into the gay/lesbian community and feels very strongly allied to her brothers and sisters in that community. To illustrate the depth of her commitment, Kisha stated that she would be willing to die for the gay/lesbian cause.

We asked Kisha what had led up to her decision to undergo sexual reassignment surgery. She said that "it started when I accepted that there was a feeling of femininity inside me that I had been suppressing for many years. I suffered from extreme tension and pressure as a result of suppressing it." She said "I finally gave myself a chance to express it. I felt like a more whole

person. At the beginning I had to just trust the way I felt. The more I let my feelings out, the more calm and happy my life became. It was like coming out of a closet once again. Once out, I never wanted to go back."

She said that her life is now much more even-keeled. Graham (her original name) and Kisha have combined as a whole person. Before, they existed side by side. At that point, she would let out the feminine, and then pull it back in. "Now I feel integrated, calm, happy, stable, and mentally in tune," she says.

Kisha concludes with a comment about her partner, Dale. "Dale has been my source of inspiration and joy for the past year and a half and I know for a fact that I would not be where I am it were not for him. I thank God for Dale every day."