

ARTS

Kahn's technicolor landscapes light up gallery

Who: Wolf Kahn
What: 'Fields Woods Hills' exhibition opening
When: 5-8 p.m. Friday
Where: Tayloe Piggott Gallery
How much: Free
Web: TayloePiggottGallery.com

By Lindsay Wood

The Beatles weren't the only ones who saw the beauty of "tangerine trees and marmalade skies." Welcome to the world of the famed color field artist Wolf Kahn.

"Fields Woods Hills," an exhibition of Kahn's work, will open with a reception at 5 p.m. Friday at Tayloe Piggott Gallery.

Kahn, 85, is known for his otherworldly paintings fusing a wild spectrum of color with the complexity of the natural world. Often a forest of tall trees is transformed through his work into a kaleidoscope of muted greens juxtaposed with orange hills and a lavender horizon.

His work is commonly categorized as abstract expressionism.

"He's one of the most important living colorists," gallery owner Tayloe Piggott said.

Born in Germany in 1927, Kahn and his family fled Germany to escape persecution from the Nazi regime in 1939. Kahn spent a year in Cambridge, England, before reuniting with his family in New York City.

He went on to graduate from the High School of Music and Art in 1945 and then worked under the famed abstract expressionist Hans Hoffman as a studio assistant at the Hans Hoffman School of Fine Art. Two years later he completed his bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago.

His examination of nature is recorded as a series of bright epiphanies usually found while walking the boundaries of the Vermont summer home he shares with his wife, painter Emily Mason. Kahn recollects his visions in his New York City studio from pastel sketches or photographs.



COURTESY PHOTO

The richness of this large oil painting, "Picnic Spot in Yellowstone," by Wolf Kahn, embodies the abstract expressionist's mastery of pictorial landscapes and color fields. One of 45 works that will be shown at Tayloe Piggott Gallery, it will hang from Friday until March 30.

Kahn's paintings hang in the permanent collections of many major museums, including the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New

York City, as well as the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

The gallery will house a collection of 45 pictorial landscapes in pastels and oils. The exhibition will be on display through March 30.

Graffiti style emboldens painter Smith's wild subjects

Who: Erin Ashlee Smith
What: Opening reception
When: 6-9 p.m. Thursday
Where: The Rose
How much: Free
Web: ErinAshlee.com, TheRoseJH.com

By Lindsay Wood

Erin Ashlee Smith spent her childhood in Louisiana and Arkansas, watching trains covered in graffiti shuttle down their tracks.

While the rebel art form repels some, it inspired Smith. Now 28, she paints bold landscapes and animals with sharp lines and vivid colors. It's "Wyoming wildlife in an urban graffiti style," she said.

The snowboarder draws inspiration from her surroundings while working on the bowl patrol at Jackson Hole Mountain Resort, but her pieces are nontraditional and full of imagination. Her collection being shown at the Rose starting Thursday will feature trout, bison, eagles and owls in addition to avalanche and mountain scenes on canvases and skateboards.

The artwork is a reflection of her personality, she said.

Living with skateboarders helped her to see the potential of using skate desks as a painting surface. Rather than throwing them away,



COURTESY PHOTO

"Hard Slab," one of Smith's favorite paintings in her collection, uses bold colors and sharp, graphic lines to achieve a graffiti-like style that the artist has admired since growing up in Louisiana and Arkansas.

Smith recycles them and turns them into works of art, she said.

Smith's love of drawing and painting began as a child when she picked up an orange crayon and scribbled her name in broad letters across the wall. Her mother still

razzes her for blaming the early act of vandalism on her brother.

A self-taught artist, Smith doodled on paper with ink for many years. Her only training came in eighth- and ninth-grade art classes. A friend forced her to try painting

about 10 years ago, shortly after she moved to Jackson, and she "hasn't put it down since."

An accident five years ago left Smith unable to use her right hand to paint. Rather than give up, she taught herself to paint with her left hand. Now she paints easily with both.

Primarily working in acrylics, Smith breaks out her brushes for nearly 30 hours a week in between her jobs on ski patrol and as a breakfast chef at the Alpine House. She confesses to not having the patience for oils. Still, it takes about a week for her to finish a work of art. Smith prefers to use acrylics straight from the tube to get punchier colors.

Smith has sold several pieces from her collection and has been commissioned by High Society Free-ride of Aspen, Colo., to design a snowboard graphic. She has also painted a large, graffiti-style piece for Freshbikes Cycling, located in Maryland and Virginia.

She admires the work of Washington artists John Osgood and Shanna Duncan, both of whom bring similar grit to their styles and visions.

Smith's work, about 20 pieces, will hang at the Rose for a month. She plans to hang work in August at the Snake River Brewery and Restaurant as part of a collaborative show with steel sculpture artist Larry Frackenhohl.