

UNDISCOVERED ARTISTS



"September 11," by Karen Leeds

Color therapy

Painting provides spiritual release for Scottsdale artist

By MICHELLE BURGESS
SUNDAY ARTS

Welcome to week one of our 2003 Undiscovered Artist Contest. Our first competitor is Karen Leeds, 47, who moved to the East Valley 10 years ago and now lives in Scottsdale. A native of Flushing, N.Y., Leeds is self-employed in the sales/marketing field, but her true passion is as an acrylic painter.

During downtown Scottsdale's summer ArtWalks (7 to 9 p.m. Thursdays) and regular gallery hours throughout the 10 weeks of the contest, Leeds' paintings will be on display at Victoria Boyce Gallery, 7130 E. Main St.

Q: How long have you pursued art, and how did your interest begin?

A: I've been a poet, writer and musician on and off for more than three decades, but I only started to paint three years ago. It was my mid-life awakening! I was coping with a lot of stress at the time, as well as some personal health struggles. I needed a way to integrate all of these experiences, and I found myself inexplicably drawn to painting as a spiritual, cathartic release. Thanks to a couple of significant mentors and perfect timing, the paintings started pouring out.

Q: What is the best thing about the process of creating your work?

A: I love the freedom that

comes when I'm working. It takes courage, which spills out into other areas of my life. It led me into taking an unlikely day job, from which I just resigned.

Q: From where does your inspiration come?

A: I am fascinated with color, texture, shapes and forms. Unusual linear perspectives and foreshadowing often catch my eye and become the basis of a composition.

Q: What are you trying to express through your finished work? Do you think your pieces appeal to the masses or to a more select group?

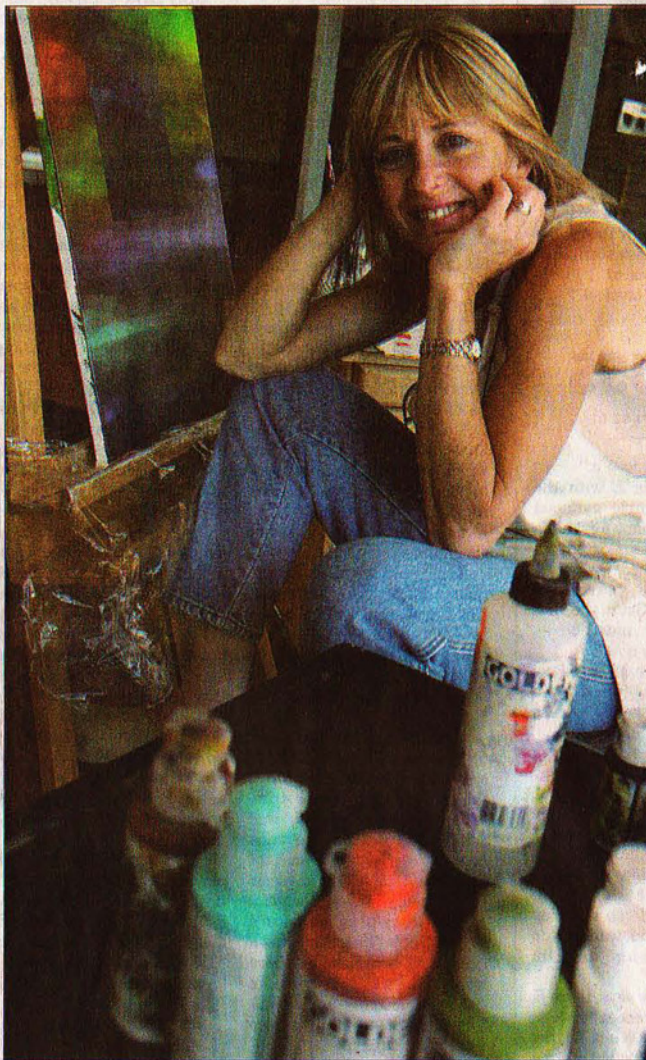
A: I think folks respond to a certain raw quality in my work since my style is still very much in the process of being formed and defined. They can relate to this.

Q: If you were forced to shut down your artistic side for a year, how would that affect you?

A: I can tell you exactly, because it just happened. I wanted to create financial independence so I could paint purely for pleasure. I was hired by a major retail brokerage house, but I learned that as a painter I simply must go inward and stay there for days. The life of a financial consultant is very outward-driven. My health went down and I lost touch with myself. It was too much of a price to pay, so I quit a couple of months ago.

Q: What is your ultimate goal regarding your pursuit of art?

A: To know myself. To improve ... to be authentic ... to give back.

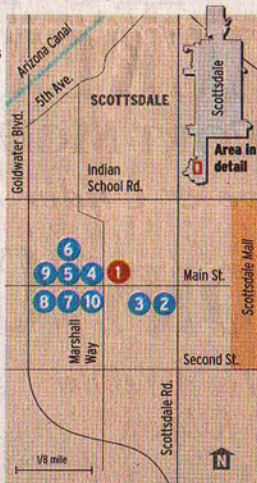


PHOTOS BY JENNIFER...

Undiscovered Artist Contest

During the next 10 weeks, a different finalist will be profiled each week in Sunday Arts & Entertainment. At the end of the competition, readers will be asked to judge whose art is the best. The art of all 10 finalists is on display in 10 downtown Scottsdale galleries through Aug. 9. The winner will be announced Aug. 24. Below are the artists and the galleries that are hosting them.

- 1 Week 1:**
Karen Leeds
Victoria Boyce Galleries
7130 E. Main St.
(480) 941-2494
- 2 Week 2:**
Cindy Lou Jackson
LaKAE Gallery
7175 E. Main St.
(480) 874-2624
- 3 Week 3:**
Jean Turner Smith
Leslie Levy Gallery
7137 E. Main St.
(480) 947-2925
- 4 Week 4:**
Jen Heath
Wilde Meyer Gallery
4142 N. Marshall Way
(480) 945-2323
- 5 Week 5:**
Dann Dykas
Colores by Wilde Meyer
7100 E. Main St.
(480) 947-1489



- 6 Week 6:**
Sacha Colvin
Duley-Jones Gallery
7100 E. Main St. #D
(480) 945-8475
- 7 Week 7:**
Erik Luebker
Chiaroscuro Gallery
7156 E. Main St.
(480) 429-0711
- 8 Week 8:**
Joe Mann
Joan Cawley Gallery
7135 E. Main St.
(480) 947-3548
- 9 Week 9:**
Samantha Smith
Bonner
David Gallery
7040 E. Main St.
(480) 941-8500
- 10 Week 10:**
Julee Hutchison
Meyer Gallery
7173 E. Main St.
(480) 947-6372

Karen Leeds says she appreciates the release she gets from creating art. "I'm working," she says, "takes courage out into the world."



"Mitote," by K...