

SANDY CARSON GALLERY

Tunson Blazes On Two Paths

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By Mary Voelz-Chandler
Rocky Mountain News

Floyd Tunson has blazed bright in the regional art scene for years, then retreated to his studio apparently to find spiritual fuel for more.

From large-scale paintings and constructions that touch on ethnicity and the cast-off status of too many young black men - here, I'm thinking of the standout works in the "Endangered Species" series of the past decade - to raucous examples of abstraction, Tunson generates a buzz wherever his work is shown.

Now, that's an exhibition of nine paintings and works in mixed mediums on view at Sandy Carson Gallery, a return of sorts for the Manitou Springs-based artist. Yes, he participated in the Sangre de Cristo Arts and Conference Center's I-25 shows earlier this year; Tunson was the only artist represented both in the "new" portion and in the segment of work by members of the old I-25 Artist Alliance. And a figural drawing was in a regional component with which former Metropolitan Center for the Visual Arts' director Sally Perisho augmented the traveling show "The Figure in American Art" in 2002.

But the visually stimulating and intellectually challenging nature of this new work marks two paths: a look to the future, as well as a nod to past abstraction, a field in which Tunson excels.

For instance, in the massive Untitled #108, the three-panel piece in the front window, Tunson has created a tour de force of action, whereas Untitled #97 shows the influence of an organizational scheme, a near-grid in black that suggests perspective and balance.

A rare indication of narrative comes in the unusual Untitled #109 (Old School Re-Mix), in which Tunson has added the vignette of small cartoon-like figures parodying symbols of African colonialism to another bold canvas in which he silently explains the pure joy of painting - slashes, drips and all.

From a historic studio in a quirky town, from a painter who also is a longtime teacher, comes work that shows a rigor and excitement that serves as an unusual foil for the other show on view. Andrea Modica's photographs, reviewed in an earlier column, demonstrate the solitude and depth inherent in the study of humanity.

The Carson lineup of shows this fall has been strong (before this duo was new work by Frank Sampson and Virginia Folkestaad). But the gallery certainly is not immune to the changes that occasionally blow through the art community.

This summer, gallery director Mark Masuoka resigned, to become executive director of the Bemis Center for Contemporary Arts in Omaha; he had joined the gallery - to be called Carson Masuoka - in 2001. Then in November, his successor, Jeremy Stern, left - to follow Masuoka to the Bemis, and concentrate more on his own work.

Now in place: William Biety, who moved to Denver about 18 months ago after a



- Floyd Tunson: New Works
- What: Paintings and mixed media pieces by the Manitou Springs-based artist, with "Andrea Modica: Photographs"
 - Where and when: Sandy Carson Gallery, 760 Santa Fe Drive; through Jan. 2
 - Information: 303-573-8585

[See more work by Floyd Tunson](#)

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lengthy career operating galleries in south Florida. That's what we call culture shock.