

## C. Gregory Gummersall – Soul Abstractionist

By Dave Tourje, President, Chouinard Foundation May 2003

Abstract Expressionism, probably the last century's most continually dominant and influential art "ism", arguably rammed down the throats of the art/thinking public by the art world rainmakers and vested interests of the day, was poked, thwarted and ultimately subverted by the POP movement of the early 60's. That its reign was so thoroughly dismantled is a typical study of theory/anti theory played out on a socio – art level. This, notwithstanding, one cannot deny the basic emotional and spiritual message which is conveyed by the notion of Abstraction which for pure satisfaction of soul, remains thoroughly unchallenged.

With the recent passing of Emerson Woelffer, one is reminded of the great Southern California Abstractionists: Woelffer, Matsumi Kanimitsu, Richards Ruben, Richard Diebenkorn, among others and considers their devotion to this genre amidst the hellish turmoil and onset of Post Modernism, less an art movement than an expression of a confused society, seeking to find itself through its art forms. In this sea of fragmentation, Abstract painting is yet hung onto by a younger generation than mentioned, who in the midst of the post-modern world, continue the message of wonder found in the best of Abstraction. C. Gregory Gummersall is one of those painters.

Gummersall was born in Idaho and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, but lived in Los Angeles for many years, forging his art – identity as many Los Angeles urban artists do – in the fractured, often petty art scene of Los Angeles before re – establishing himself in Colorado.

"I see Los Angeles as very 'image' conscious.... the Hollywood actor's concern with the portrayal of 'image'. Surface, slickness, high gloss come to mind. I've always felt more of a kinship with the New York Artists like Rauschenberg, Motherwell, Johns and Southern Californian Artists that were more in tune with the New York/European traditions such as Richard Diebenkorn, Sam Francis and Emerson Woelffer."

Gummersall's new work is particularly engaging. Showing a virtuosity and versatility uncommon in even the late – great Abstractionists, Gummersall moves forward – likely influenced by the sheer space and volume of his new digs, a rural part of S. W. Colorado known for its austere beauty.

"At present, it works well for me to have the low motion/high aesthetic environment of rural S. W. Colorado in which to create my art, and the convenience of Santa Fe, Telluride, Aspen, Scottsdale and California for exhibiting and selling art via our gallery representatives. It creates a nice balance. I have a quiet, safe and beautiful space in which to paint and the "excitement" of traveling to more urban areas for the exhibit and sales of my work."

Whatever the case, space, beauty and a sense of the understanding of volume enter his work and mesmerize his viewers. Drawing from past idioms from the abstract to conceptual, Gummersall's paintings offer a fresh view on a well – honed idiom.

Within the postmodern maelstrom, the arts are made up of individuals who hold the aesthetic values and grammar, which, however mutated, make up their unique individuality. C Gregory Gummersall is one such individual.