

Add color to your world by taking in the colorful created by Janice Mueller as a gathering of her large oil paintings is displayed at the Rauch Gallery on Gaston College Dallas campus.

"I've been accused of being a colorfield artist in that a lot of earlier paintings, if they weren't monochromatic, they were layered in colors, more colors under it and exposed by the overall feel was one color," Mueller said.

The works are layered with colors and packed with symbols as the artist explores a journey through history, mankind's and her own. This exhibit marks a chronological development of her artwork and grew in part from her residency at the Vermont Studio Center.

"I had the opportunity to really go places within myself that in our everyday life we don't have time to reach," she said.

Mueller makes a conscious effort to explore, to let the art take her on a journey.

"Personally, I believe creating a work of art is a collaborative effort between the artist and the material, the canvas you are creating as an artist, you cannot control everything," she said. "Once you start the picture, your will will gradually tell you what it needs if you let go of it enough to listen.

"As an artist, it comes from someplace within you, but if you're trying to control that you're not going to be able to get it."

Shades of purple dominate another pair of paintings featuring an age-old spiraling symbol that recurs in Mueller's work. The richness of gold is added as an accent.

"Gold is a very precious metal and these symbols that I tend to guild, cover with gold, tend to be precious symbols in our culture," Mueller said.

In another work, the spirals return in red and black on a background of colors dominated by a layering of purple. Above, the colors appear to reveal a golden X slashed across the top.

"My concentration has been, it's a historical journey and I'm very much interested in archeology and history," Mueller said. "I think of the painting on two levels: one is how we reference things in the past, the way-past. We have these symbols, the labyrinth or spirals, which have been present throughout human development and they are still present. They have meaning but we don't know what their actual meaning is.

"I use the surface the refer to our present meaning of what we think they are and the under level to refer to the past."

On a personal level, they can speak of how each layer of life is covered up with the next layer of life.

That spiral reappears in red and gold on another purple work. In the center two large circles cross, opening a sort of gold eye into a sea of lilac and lavender.

"The middle of the thing is almost unbroken, it is almost empty of anything but color," Mueller said. "There's a large spiral starting into that. It's a lot of depth in different places, all these spirals are moving, being developed, there is this spatial quality they are going through.

"The two rings look almost as two things that are coming slowly together. When they get there, they won't fit."

Shapes surface in the sea of color in Mueller's later works.

Across the top of one canvas runs a blue strip holding what may be gilded windows. Below, red ladders seem to play and sump across the fiery orange canvas.

"It's very organized," Mueller explained. "It's a goal and the ladders take us up to that and we don't quite reach it."

Currently, the work is untitled by she's leaning toward changing it to unnamed.

"Because it's like that climbing that we do," she said. "We climb up ladders and down ladders and never reach the goal. If we do, there are other goals that we set for ourselves."

That sounds remarkably similar to how the artist approaches painting "A lot of what I do is intuitive and it doesn't always come out of my head directly," Mueller said. "I paint intuitively and stand back and let all the things that are on the canvas affect me and then I go back to it until the panel says it's done."