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Irving Bahe II, Rossi Bright EXHIBITS on tap

July 14 Arts Crawl was once again buzzing with local artists showcasing their assorted styles of art. The Opo Gallery, located at 305 S. Second St., across from Camille's Sidewalk Café was no exception to the local buzz. The gallery recently moved, and requested via email to spread the word about their new digs.

And the quaint cottage features its share of talent.

Irving Bahe II and Rossi Bright, both local, and no stranger to the flux of talented artists in the area, came out to share their works of art, and to also share what art means to them.

Diné artist Bahe has made a name for himself with his comical cartoon characters depicting the "rez life" on T-shirts. Tapping his fry bread humor, his work examines reservation life – pieces that Native Americans truly identify with.

But, there's also a serious side to Bahe as he creates paintings showcasing the strength of his people – the Diné. Sitting inside the Opo gallery, Bahe eagerly awaits the questions that onlookers will have for him regarding his paintings. He's optimistic of his talent, but he still wonders if the onlookers will take in the paintings with some depth.

“My paintings pretty much reflect beauty and balance. One of my paintings is about the Navajo Code talkers,” he said. “One part is about beauty, where the man is going off to war to protect his family at home, and the other is balance putting it all and fitting together. My other paintings are about dance and songs from the inner spirit, the strength that comes from within the spirit.”

What inspires Bahe to paint are the simplest of things that humans take for granted, such as nature, life, and strength in those things.

“I like to paint things with strength like lightning; you see a lot of lightning in my art,” he said. “Lightning to me represents power and strength, also singing is strength. Power is generated from singing from the spirit. My art is about the spirit. It is the reasons you see my objects, whether singing or dancing, beauty comes from within the spirit.”

Another artist featured was Rossi Bright. Originally from the Midwest, Bright was smitten with art as a small child, and her fascination and passion for it continued to grow. She describes her art as an inspiration of color, and the idea that everything is alive whether we see it or not.

Bright has studied multiple forms of art, and even played in a band in New York, where she created music with the other members to rebel against the music industry. Bright says it’s from these journeys that she takes from all things that come her way. For the past 20 years she has called Gallup her home, and she continues to explore life in the southwest.

“I am intrigued by the inward and outward journey of life; what may be considered as real or illusionary or unknown, often defined by constructs of dimension, being, space, time, perception, and the existing knowledge of the time we may inhabit,” she said. “There is also delight in working with the nourishing, deliciousness of color and the feeling that everything is inherently vibrantly alive around us and within us. In challenging or playing with what is seen or unseen, I may use interactive vibrations of color, depth, perspective or lack thereof and various imagery which may result in portrayals or series that are mixing of humor, introspection, representation, metaphor, symbolism, storytelling, the mystical, the surreal, abstraction, and/or other worlds, real or imagined.”

Bright describes the feeling of painting, trying to be a channel whatever flows through her and emerges.

“For me art is a reflective of life, endlessly rich in questions, perceptions, curiosities and moments … and a deep longing that all may exist, be sustained within a loving, diverse matrix of acceptance, appreciation, purpose, understanding and expansiveness.”

Opo gallery hours are Tuesday and Wednesday, 10 am to 3 pm, and Tuesday evenings during Summer Nightly Indian Dances.

For more information find on Opo on Facebook, or call (505) 726-2497.

By Dee Velasco
For the Sun