

Artist got tired of being negative

BY JACKILEROUX
Staff Writer

You might say Margie Kelk and her art are one entity — just as one has evolved, so, too, has the other.

The North York artist, presenting

her show "Morality Tales" at the Cornwall Regional Art Gallery until Nov. 2, is not as angry as she was in her passionate youth. Like most people, Kelk has mellowed with age.

Viewers of her figuratively semi-

abstract work will find this out for themselves. The darker, harsher and very large pieces are a clear symbol of that youth.

The more polished, controlled pieces are her latest.

"I got tired of being negative. The first ones were out of anger. With the later ones, rather than wanting to be angry all the time, you want something positive to look toward," she explains from her Toronto home.

Perhaps to a lesser degree today, Kelk is very much the conservationist and environmentalist. Anti-nuclear, anti-war messages in her pieces are sent in an abstract way, but much louder and clearer is the message of a fallen world.

"The earlier (paintings) are much more full of the anguish, because in the earlier paintings I was more worried about the world falling apart," Kelk explains.

Size, shape and texture all have much to do with Kelk's use of symbolism, the most obvious one being the lack of geometric perfections.

"The shapes for me did symbolize a part of the fractured world. So some of the paintings are not square, meaning it's not perfect," she says.

The physical contours of her wood or masonite pieces, all broken shapes from her earlier world, also reflect that fragmented planet known as Earth.

"The works are constructions whose intent transcends any physical boundaries which traditional frames might imply," Kelk says.

"They were basically the world in turmoil, the world falling apart, what man was doing to it, the false beliefs that we were actually destroying humanity or the world as it

exists for mankind."

Resigning to the fact that those beliefs were, in fact, 'false' is what relaxed her later paintings, mostly done using the more conventional format of canvas.

"They're much more settled. They're looking for more of a positive thing to do rather than a negative worry about what's happening. They're looking for a positive aim to work towards," she says.

The fact that they are much smaller tells the story of the more controlled and refined artist who, because of her seasoned view of the world, is able to contentedly work within the confines of the traditional frame.

While the term "figuratively semi-abstract" may sound like a contradiction, Kelk's work in itself is a contradiction, just as life around her is a contradiction.

"It is figurative work, but it's also semi-abstract in the sense that there are figures, but they're set in an abstract world. They centre upon the dialogue between reality and the scope of human aspirations," she says.

The control Kelk feels in her most recent work is what has allowed her to change her focus from the human world to the realm of the spiritual, evidenced in "Morality Tales" by depictions of spiritual beings and clouds.

"If you see the clouds, the perspective from which it is taken is pointing upwards. It's getting away from the material problems, how to reach out and see perfection without destroying everything in sight.

"Clouds represent ascent into the sublime which is, in fact, the way to Paradise," she says.



STATEMENTS OF IDENTITY — Margie Kelk's "The Last Season," is an attempt to combine impressive yet complex statements of identity, survival and transcendence. Kelk's works are on display at the Cornwall Regional Art Gallery.

(Staff photo/Bowman)

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