

Art review

At the Freyberger, color and sheen

The works of two artists — paintings by **Hinrich J.W. Schueler** and steel sculpture by **Milan 'Skip' Kralik** — play in extreme counterpoint in the gallery on the Penn State Berks campus.

By **Ron Schira**
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ACRYLIC PAINTINGS BY Hinrich J.W. Schueler and steel sculptures by Milan "Skip" Kralik are on view in the Freyberger Gallery at Penn State Berks campus through Oct. 13.

The exhibit, titled "Here and Across the Sea," follows a form of Modernist abstraction. Each artist attempts to invoke a spirit of harmony and spatial configuration that references, at least through their titles, topics other than art.

Schueler's paintings, for example, are quoted by the artist as "symphonic" and according to him are composed of up to 60 layers of transparent liquid pigment to achieve their surface luster. Of the 12 medium-sized artworks (about 50 by 40 inches apiece), they are all numbered and titled "Color Spaced Painting" and literally glow with brazen color even when the room is dark.

Schueler lives and works in Schwabisch Gmund, Germany, and is on a five-week residency exchange program with the Banana Factory in Bethlehem.

Although allusions to such imagery as radiant butterflies and stingrays may seem apparent, some more than others, the artist is solely interested in luminous color and cites the work

If you go

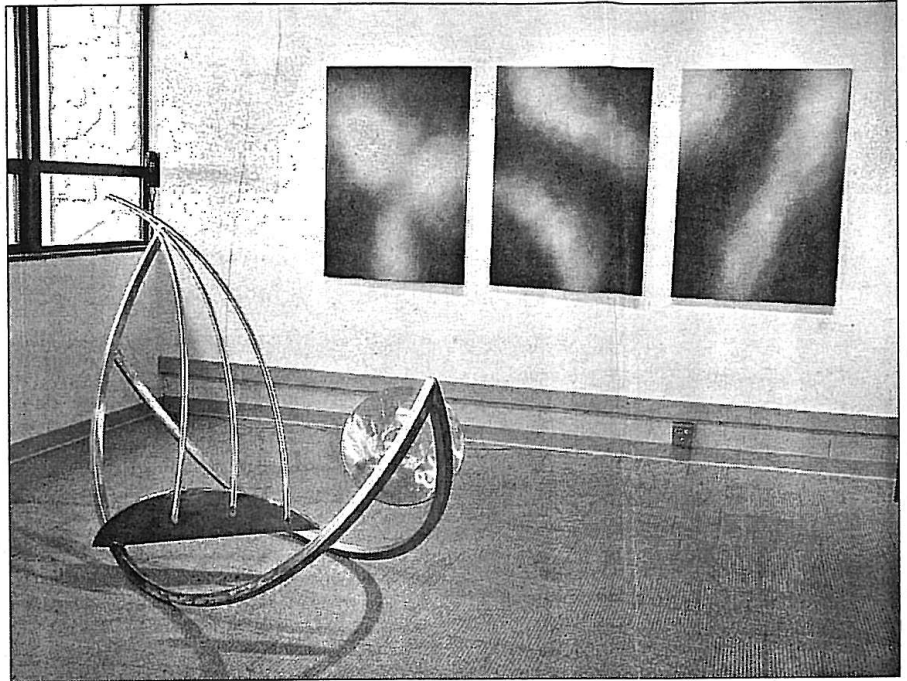
The Freyberger Gallery of Penn State Berks campus, Spring Township, is located in the Perkins Center off Broadcasting Road. Call gallery director Marilyn J. Fox at 610-396-6140 for information.

of Mark Rothko and J.M.W. Turner as his primary inspirations.

He also credits the German philosopher Goethe on his studies of the psychological relevance of color and identifies his colors by equating them with emotional, mental or spiritual conditions.

Much of the work is characterized by gradations of blazing primary color with very little gray. At points, he lays it on impasto, as if unfolding or splitting the space into areas of polarity, such as a colliding storm front or the sun hidden behind clouds. One of the pieces looks like an open shirt, brilliant light bursting from within.

He says: "My style of painting is guided by spiritual ideas rather than lead by the phenomena of the material world, as with music. The essence of this kind of painting is the spirit of color, the rhythm and harmony of the sound of color. This



"Rockabilly," a steel sculpture by Skip Kralik, in the Freyberger Gallery: kinetic art.

kind of painting has nothing to do with chaos or arbitrariness, as the colors show a logical system of chromatics everywhere they are seen, in nature and in art."

Regardless of his admission that his color system is based on Goethe's theory of chromatics, or that he claims his work shares qualities with classical music, his work is not in the least subtle. In fact, his paintings ultimately need an explanation to embellish the blatant decorativeness of this expensive so-called non-materialistic work, of which the artist says, in a complex 300-word statement, it does not "depend on intellectual, highbrow speculations."

Although Spinnerstown (Bucks County) resident Skip Kralik's 11 exquisitely crafted

stainless-steel forms boast no more than a pleasurable way to occupy space, they seem to sprout right out of the David Smith school of methodology with just a touch of Isamu Noguchi. And, following Picasso's lead, they are more synthetic than analytical, giving way to curvilinear and spherical form rather than the typically angular and cubistic square.

Atop all this, a few of his pieces are kinetic, meaning that they move when they are touched.

"Rock and Roller," for instance, will wobble, and "Rockabilly" see-saws. Yet in spite of their motility, these weighty pieces of shiny metal are sturdy and well balanced.

Other works sit immovable and stoic in their proud stance, dignifying the eight- to 10-foot-tall space they occupy. The majority of them seem thin, though, as if stretching or reaching upward. Certain pieces like "Sunsweep" and "Solar Column" make reference to the sun almost in a worshipful manner as the sculptures gleam and reflect tangible light from their surface.

"I like people-size sculpture," the artist said, "or sculpture which makes you look up toward the sky just a little."

This past February, Kralik was commissioned by Penn State Berks to install a 17-foot steel sculpture called "Solar Wings" at the Broadcasting Road entrance to the college. A little more than people-sized, it can be seen from the road.

Kralik has been making stainless-steel sculptures for more than 30 years and is on the board of directors for the Lehigh Art Alliance. Frequently exhibited throughout the Philadelphia/ Lehigh Valley area, his work is in the permanent collections of the Michener and Woodmere art museums as well as in numerous private collections.

Although I don't see much of a connection between these two artists, the juxtaposition between the reflective steel and the lustrous color still makes for a visually dazzling exhibit and well worth a visit. Otherwise, they are literally continents apart.

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