

“Art of Impermanence” Resonates with Chanting

By Katie Crown

The function of art is evident in the current Julian Scott Gallery exhibit, “Art of Impermanence.” The artist, Cindy Ludlam, who is based out of the Boston area, has created an integrated and fully-actualized exhibit in which light, sound, structure, color, movement and stillness are equally profound. While creating the exhibited images Ludlam would engage in chanting and meditation, an act which enabled her to move beyond the boundaries of self.

Ludlam’s artwork begins with an oil painting that she creates while chanting. The images have abstract qualities and appear to transmute between clouds, water, single-cell life forms, natural formations in ice and the movement of insects.

“Art of Impermanence” provides a full-bodied experience for its audience. The gallery space has been carefully organized with a softened atmosphere. The artwork, simplistically hung, amplifies the sensitively lit walls. The space includes deep red rugs and meditation cushions, which the audience is invited to sit on. Another experiential option is to listen to a number of musical mantras and lectures concerning equanimity and impermanence on an MP3 player through a personal set of headphones.

The beauty of the exhibit is Lud-



photo by Katie Crown

Ludlam’s work was expressed through the power of light, music and image

lam’s practice of integrating artistic mediums. In a practical sense, Ludlam became inspired to integrate art forms from the necessity of photographing her work and

then putting it into the computer. Her digital work derives from what she describes as, “a way for me to move space intuitively. I would move space while chanting that

way and it seemed to really work with the mantra. Space could move quicker like how the words moved and then I would freeze that image and go back to the painting.”

The pertinence of color is clearly evident to the viewer, but to Ludlam, color does not come to mind. She said, “When I started making work, I had a ton of color and I knew nothing about color. I kept trying to work with color ... it was a disaster ... I started making sculpture, there was no color. Color came back in when I started doing Kundalini yoga and chanting and there is no thought with color at all with these. I get paint out and I start chanting and the marks and the colors are whatever happens. It’s coming from somewhere, it is just happening where there is a lot of warmth.”

A reception was held Saturday evening, March 21, and featured live Kirtan music and chanting performed by Hari Khalsa and Warrick Moses on clarinet. Khalsa said, “Chanting is one of the most blissful forms of meditation, because first and foremost, the voice is the most beautiful of all instruments. It is the most basic of all instruments.”

Khalsa began studying chanting 35 years ago and has ever since with yogi Bhajan. She lived in India for five years. Khalsa was able to guide the audience by advising them to avoid anticipation and expectation of their chanting experience.

The chanting during the event was a combination of Gurumukhi, Farsi and Sanskrit languages. While the mantras were from the Sikh tradition from more than 500 years ago, chanting has a long legacy within religions that are worldwide and thousands of years old. Khalsa noted the biochemical response of chanting where the tongue touches the roof of the mouth stimulating the pineal gland and releasing endorphins. Khalsa said, “We like endorphins. Endorphins make us happy.”

The audience, seated on the meditation cushions, participated in four different chants. The first chant, “ONG NAMO GURU DEV NAMO,” translates as, “I call upon the wisdom inside me and outside of me, to protect and guide me.” This mantra is used as a prayer for protection and centering to call on the infinite for guidance.

Ludlam uses chanting, meditation, and Kundalini yoga in an effort to remove the emotional and intellectual blocks that are so easy to put in one’s way. Ludlam’s participation with Khalsa in chanting and meditating aided Ludlam’s process of applying paint to canvases and manipulating the paintings digitally. She sees the exhibit as the most honest of the artwork she has yet created.

“Art of Impermanence,” created and compiled by Cindy Ludlam, will be exhibited in the Julian Scott Gallery until March 28, 2009.