

art

Mark Ups

Shows in town right now include work by artists who haven't exhibited here in some time — and they're a welcome sight. ***That Was Then, This Is Now***, conjoined solos at Goodwin Fine Art, pairs paintings by Mark Villarreal and Andy Berg; though both have lived in Colorado for decades — Villarreal in Boulder,

BY

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Berg in Golden — it's been several years since either has been the subject of a Denver show. The exhibit's title refers to the fact that Villarreal and Berg went to the prestigious Kansas City Art Institute back in the late

'70s and early '80s, and the exhibit begins with a single example of work done by each artist during his student days.

Villarreal first came to local prominence in the late 1980s with heavily worked, neo-abstract expressionist paintings that were richly colored and had lots of pigment piled up by the brushwork. The '80s were dominated by neo-expressionism, an exuberant representational style, as well as conceptualism, which made Villarreal's approach seem somewhat unusual — or even out of step — at the time. In a sense, he was behind the aesthetic curve then — but as revealed by the stylistic development in contemporary painting over the intervening years, he was also ahead of it.

These recent paintings are both signature Villarreal and distinctly new. Villarreal is interested in the history of art, and in his written statement, he explains that the arc of

The rounded shapes that resemble loops or droplets dominating his recent compositions are Gorkyesque; so is the relative flatness of the coats of paint, compared with the heavy impasto he preferred in his early work.

A number of the paintings have an unusual tall, narrow shape typically associated with full-length portraits; it turns out that this aspect of the work was inspired by John Singer Sargent. Though Villarreal's compositions are totally non-objective, the vertical shape of the canvases covertly suggests the human figure.

"Venetian Painting, no. 3" is spectacular, predominantly a sunny yellow with freely drawn oval shapes outlined in black rising on the left side but offset at the top center by a turquoise one; the compositional elements are freely done and their casual placement guided by the artist's aesthetic instinct. These paintings sport limited palettes of just a few shades, so "Venetian Painting, no. 5" is nearly all red and pink, while "San Polo Painting, no. 4" is blue and black. All of the titles have Italian references; this body of work was done after Villarreal returned from a recent trip to Italy.

The Villarreal is installed in the front space, the Bergs in the back. Though Villarreal has been working at his art all along, Berg gave it up for decades while he established a construction business. After returning to studio practice, in 2009 he began to exhibit in Denver again. His paintings at Goodwin represent both the kind of work he's been doing since his return to the easel and a newer direc-

there are a bunch at Goodwin of that same high quality.

Many of the Berg pieces suggest the landscape, though there are no literal references; others have what may be figures or faces. When you zoom in on them, however, and notice their non-objective details, those impressions of recognizable features collapse. Among the standouts is

"Urere"; done in 2015, it looks to be a transitional painting balancing the spare compositions of his earlier works with the rich, complex tangles

of lines seen in the new ones. Many of the paintings are large and impossible to overlook — but don't miss the small ones, in particular "Oneiros" and "Visitatio," which are wonderful.

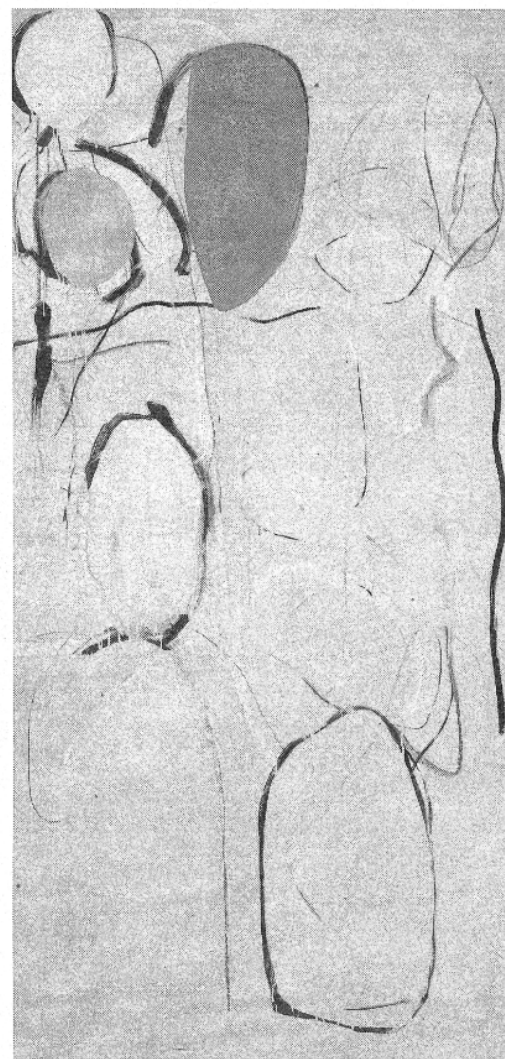
Another exhibit featuring Colorado artists who haven't shown in a while is the handsome ***Remarkable***, at Space Gallery. Its old-home-week quality is apparent immediately inside the door, as well as in the space that runs along the north end; this is where Sangetta Reddy's elegant collaged monotypes are on view. For these pieces, Reddy assembles roughly rectilinear shapes that

are then accented by lines. Though she has recently exhibited in New York and in her native India, it's been five years since Reddy has shown her work in Denver; interestingly, what's shown here also dates back to 2011.

In the middle of the soaring main space are two monumental sculptures by Charles Wooldridge, who has also had a long career but kept a low profile over the past several years.

Both sculptures are made of stone that's been carved and polished in such a way that it has a liquid or fluid character. The stone is luxurious in and of itself, but Wooldridge ups the ante by inlaying bands of metal alloy made of silver and tin into its surfaces.

Michael Gadlin takes the lead on the walls; he's someone who actually exhibits all the time. The work included here covers a lot of ground, and the range is so broad that



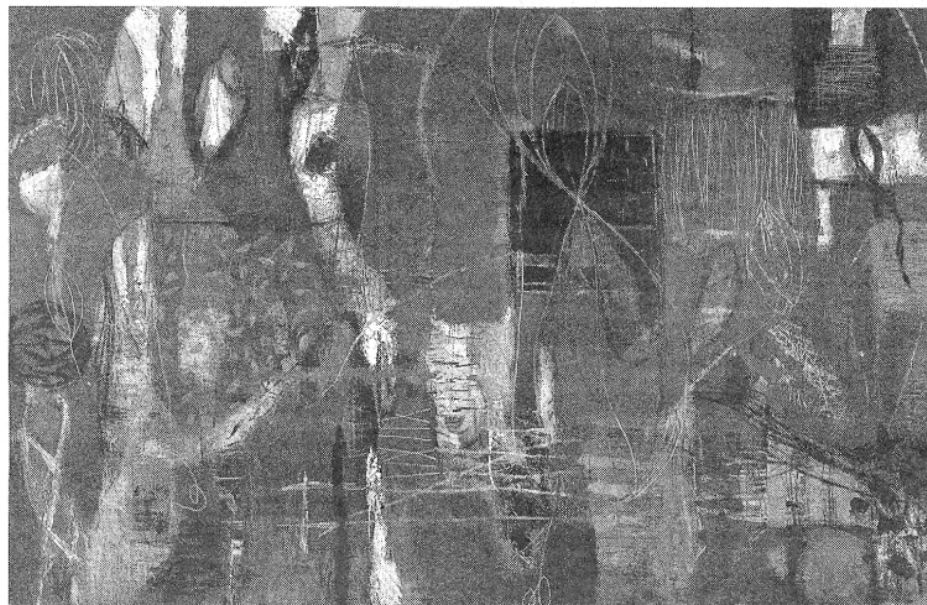
"Venetian Painting, no. 3," by Mark Villarreal, oil on panel.

his section could almost be mistaken for a group show. The large paintings are the most important — not just because of their size, but also because of the ambition revealed in their dense, complex and heavily painted

compositions. Gadlin not only does the kind of abstraction seen here, but he also works figuratively, as seen in the abstracted faces that make up his current solo at the Buell Theatre, *Refugees Welcome*.

Large, loosely constructivist paintings by Judy Campbell finish off the main space; her shapes are rough and her palette bold. Up on the mezzanine is a nice selection of delicately hued mixed-media paintings by Philip Tarlow that incorporate maps. The show finishes with dense and layered encaustics by emerging artist Skyler McGee.

The shows at Goodwin and Space provide a welcome opportunity not only to reconnect with old friends, but also to potentially make some new ones.



Michael Gadlin's "Arousal in Red," mixed media on linen panel.

his painterly development has been from the macho, two-fisted mark-making of Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock to the delicate, even feminine moves of Arshile Gorky.

I encountered one of the newer types, "Neteraat," at *Art of the State* at the Arvada Center a few months ago, and described it as among the best Berg paintings I'd seen — but

Remarkable
Through May 14, Space
Gallery, 400 Santa Fe
Drive, 720-904-1088,
spacegallery.org.