



Charles Gale has discovered that car designing and abstract painting complement each other.

Car designer shifts easily into fine arts

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There's a direct link from automotive styling to the abstract paintings Charles Gale of West Bloomfield has at the Little Gallery.

In his work as a stylist for Chrysler, Gale began to create fluid, non-representational backgrounds for his automotive designs. When he realized

the backgrounds were generating almost as much comment as the design, he moved them into the foreground for what was the beginning of a second, adjunctive career.

While his one-man show at Little Gallery is his first in this area, he has had his work there for several years. It is also in other galleries around the country.

The combination of car stylist and serious fine arts painter seems natural to him.

"A CAR DESIGNER has to be an artist — he needs an aesthetic nature to be able to communicate his ideas. He has to know color and form, and a car designer has a broad knowledge of materials available."

In Gale's case, all of this is coupled with an interest in fine arts that began when he was a youngster growing up in Kansas City, Mo.

"My art background started when I was 12. I would go to the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art and look at everything there was. The guards had to force me out on Saturday evenings."

For many years, American abstract painter Paul Jenkins was the major influence on Gale's work. He discovered, to his surprise, that Jenkins took lessons at age 12 at the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery, went to the same junior high school and studied art under the same teachers.

While some of Gale's earlier work shows the Jenkins influence, he has moved into new areas, using different materials, and has established his own style and identity.

Gale works with oil based inks on two types of surfaces — thin fabric treated with several layers of gesso and enamel coated Bristol type board.

After applying the ink, Gale works very fast, manipulating the paper

board or fabric with his hands, tilting it, moving it so the colors run and flow within a controlled area. The amount of water used, the thinning agent, and time allowed determine how rapidly the ink will move and how much it will spread.

"IT'S LIKE CONDUCTING an orchestra," he said. "I usually start out with an intent, but I don't force. I use what happens to best advantage."

When he first began to manipulate oil based inks on a slick surface, he said the end result was too busy. But, the longer he worked at the techniques, the more effective he became in controlling them. Now, he can establish a center of interest which he considers important, as well as harmony and an effect of totality.

"I know exactly what I'm going to do," he said. "I can manipulate the board to get the individually controlled areas."

It's more than an accident. The creativity comes in the new ways to get new effects. My greatest satisfaction is in combining things, creating and getting what I wanted."

Gale's show, "Synergy," will continue at Little Gallery, 915 E. Maple, through June. Hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday.

While his paintings are pure abstractions, he said, "Everybody seems to find objects in my paintings. That's satisfying to me because it means they're reaching into them."

Once Gale built a studio in his home and made the commitment to use his time away from his job as a stylist for his art, he received total support from his wife, Jan, and three children.

Mrs. Gale handles the business details of this second career.

Married daughter Debra Gurevitz is a piano teacher and avid collector of her father's paintings. A second daughter, Julie, student at Eastern Michigan University, is planning to be an architect and Steven, a high school student, is interested in both music and fine arts.



This example of Gale's work shows his concern with a central focal point as well as individual areas of interest within the total painting.

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