

Kimberly MacArthur Graham

DENVER ARTIST

KIMBERLY MACARTHUR

GRAHAM EMBRACES A

LIFESTYLE AS

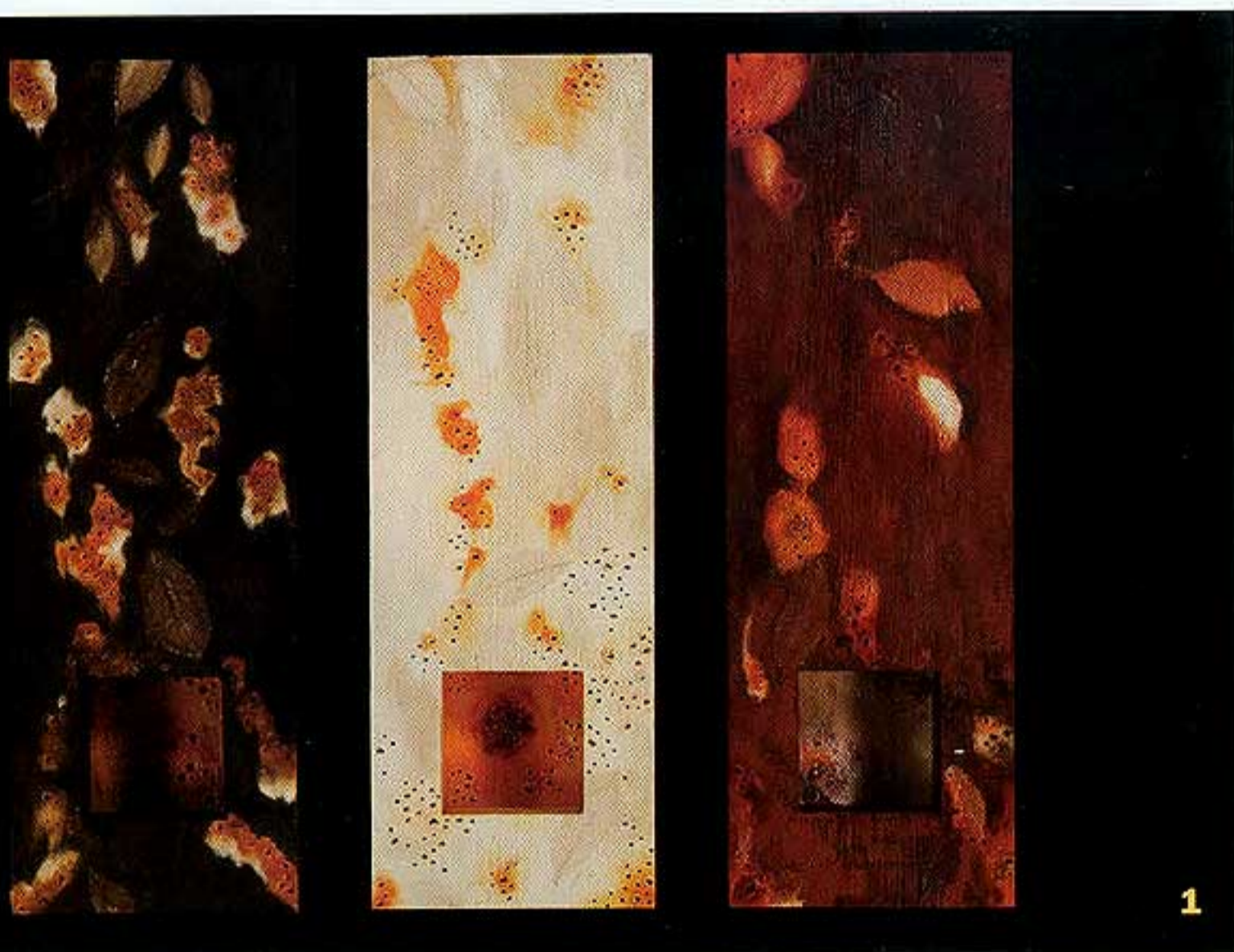
CONTEMPLATIVE,

TEXTURED AND

ATTUNED TO NATURE

AS HER PAINTINGS

A PEEK INTO THE MINDS AND HEARTS OF COLORADO'S MOST-TALENTED ARTISTS



WHO: Kimberly MacArthur Graham

WHAT: Oil and Mixed Media

WHERE: Stoneheart Gallery, 28005 Highway 74, Evergreen, 303-670-0565

WHEN: Through December

CONTACT: www.kmgraham.com

ACCORDING TO STEREOTYPE, artists simply don't fit in all that well with polite society. Some tend towards painful introversion to the point of reclusivity. Others don outrageous costumes and color their hair pink or green and adopt other affectations that set them apart

from the average citizen. Many successful artists are one dimensional, channeling all their time, attention and genius into their art, and as a result, lack common sense. Still others fall victim to tempestuous melodramas and woeful paths of self-destruction.

Not Kimberly MacArthur Graham.

With her poise and her ramrod posture, her studious spectacles and her perky hairstyle, she's the picture of good health and professionalism. She likes to cook and invites groups of girlfriends for potlucks at the 1890

Victorian house she and her husband are restoring. She volunteers at a local arts center. She's a marathon runner, a hiker and a snowshoer who eats organic. She has two mixed-breed dogs and two young cats.

What's more, she has talent, innovation and the compulsion required to make it as an artist.

MacArthur remembers that during the fourth grade, she wanted to be a nun who was a scientist—sort of a Mother Teresa meets Madame Curie character. Forsaking the convent, MacArthur began her college career with her sights set on an engineering degree, then a business degree, but dropped out of Notre Dame, no less,

STORY: COLLEEN SMITH



PHOTO: DAVID MENARD

little, quiet paintings. When people saw my work, they said, 'Oh, you can sure tell a woman did these.'" MacArthur works on an intimate scale due, in part, to the size of her studio—a spare bedroom in her house. She does create diptychs and triptychs for a cumulative larger effect. In terms of shape, she favors squares or exaggerated scrolls that, like the artist, are tall and slender.

And instead of bold gestures, she focuses on small, repetitive strokes that

to enroll in art school at the University of Texas in Austin.

"It was one of the best things I ever did in my life," she claims.

TEXTURES OF LIFE MacArthur works in oil and mixed media—some more mixed than others. She textures certain paintings to the point of tiptoeing toward three-dimensional, sculptural pieces that incorporate recessions and inserts, everything from leaf skeletons to faux fur to pearls. MacArthur's paintings have a luscious juiciness to them, a richness of color and depth and sheen accomplished by lots of paint—as many as a half-dozen layers of lustrous translucent colors MacArthur boils down with linseed oil.

Deceptively simple natural forms hold court on MacArthur's paintings on

1 SOMETIMES (AWAKENING COMES IN THE FALL); MIXED MEDIA INCLUDING LEAF SKELETONS 2 ANCIENT ELEMENT: EARTH; MIXED MEDIA 3 ROYAL CAVE; MIXED MEDIA INCLUDING FAKE FUR.

panels. "Wood is such a wonderful, living surface," she says. Some of the panels, in fact, MacArthur has sandblasted to bring out the wood grain as individual as whorls on a fingerprint. Knots in the wood become part of the design. "I wouldn't say that my paintings are organic, because that would be stupid, but they are very in tune with the organic process. And they are very feminine," says the artist.

She recalls installing her paintings in a show dominated by men. "There were all these big, huge man paintings with bold gestures; then there were my

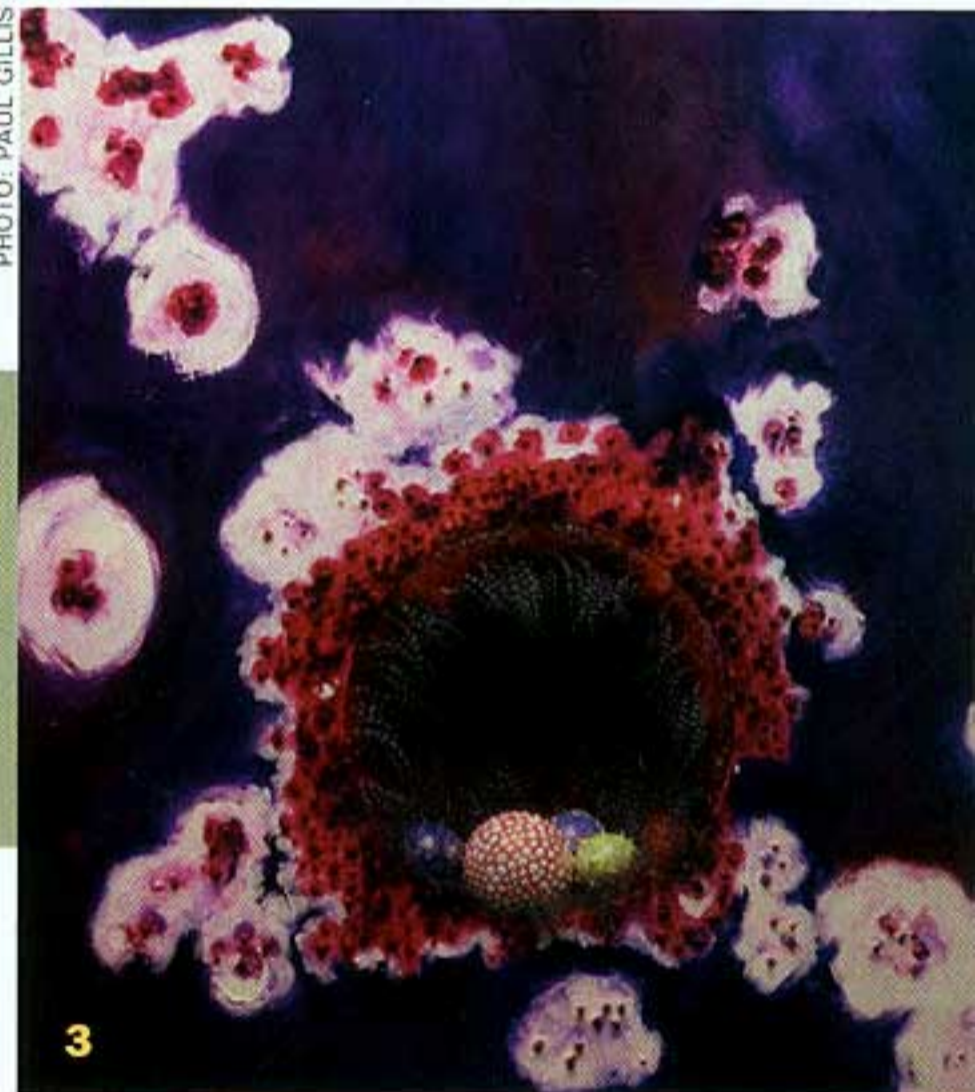


PHOTO: PAUL GILLIS

merge into patterns. She obsesses over textures, spending long periods of time bent over rendering them. The contemplative nature of her work results, naturally, in works that call the viewer to contemplation. Traces of melancholy swirl about both the artist and her art. Though lovely to behold and evocative of abiding joy, the paintings hold a wistful tension as well.

"I love things that are a bit sad more than I love things purely happy,"

she admits. "The things that are the most amazing—what makes them so lively is that they're tinged with the understanding that they're not going to last. It's inescapable: All of us get old and change and die."

MOVED BY THE SPIRIT MacArthur dealt with a great deal of death in the last year, having lost both a dear friend and a beloved cat she calls "the love of my life." Yet she's spiritual enough to believe those partings are not altogether permanent: "I'm not religious, but I know there is something out there I can't explain that makes this

world an amazing place; and when I create, I know it even more," she says.

Influenced by Northern European and Japanese art, she seeks divinity in the often overlooked, everyday details. "I'm looking for moments of beauty and grace in things that are ordinary—the way a tree bends or curves can show to me a place where normal things of daily life dissect with the divine." An avid gardener, MacArthur revels in romantic names of flowers such as "love in a mist" and "love lies bleeding." She delights as much in the forms of clematis seed heads as the showy blossoms. She's even beginning to paint on dried pods.

MacArthur's palette derives from the hot colors favored in South America, the

ART OPENINGS

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ASPEN ART MUSEUM 590 N. MILL ST., ASPEN, 970-925-8050, WWW.ASPENART-MUSEUM.ORG, FEATURING MARKUS SCHINWALD FROM DECEMBER 15 THROUGH JANUARY 18, AND AMY ADLER FROM DECEMBER 15 THROUGH FEBRUARY 5.

Middle East and Africa, but MacArthur also is a green artist. "I am not just inspired by nature, I revere it. I am very environmentally sensitive; and oil painting is such a nasty environmentally incorrect thing that I feel guilty and

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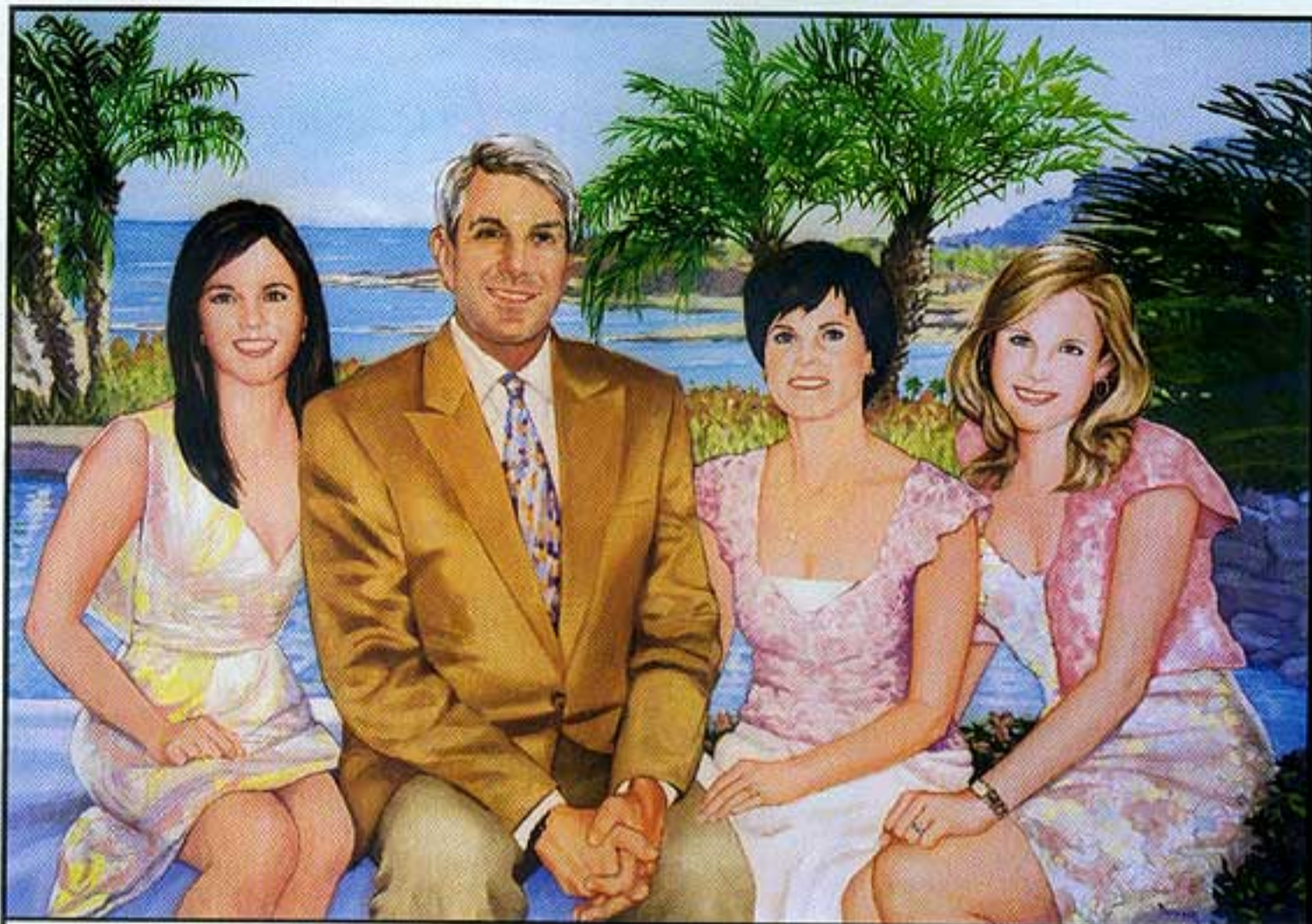
try to make up for it by all else I do: walking and biking everywhere, eating organic, recycling, conserving water." Not to mention working outdoors. Frequently, MacArthur sets up a makeshift studio in her charming backyard—four lots threaded with brick-paved paths and antique iron pergolas dripping with vines.

CONNECTING THROUGH ART The troubles of the world stir MacArthur, who steps up on her soapbox to defend art and attack the trends of the times. "Artists and creative people are key in this time when people are so out of touch. Artists need to start a dialogue about why things are so screwed up. Why we're so far from the planet and other creatures here. Why we're all just 'Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!' Why we're consumed with all these toys, but not concerned about how we're killing the planet. I can't live that way, and I don't live that way," she says.

"Art is this little window. I like to put things in little boxes because we live lives in little boxes; and we don't communicate with people...but art can connect us in an age when we're feeling so isolated," she says.

"The arts are so devalued, but it's ignorance to think of art as unnecessary. Artists are so completely human, and they expose humanity. It feels sometimes so hopeless, but what I want to be remembered for," she says, "is painting." **CE**

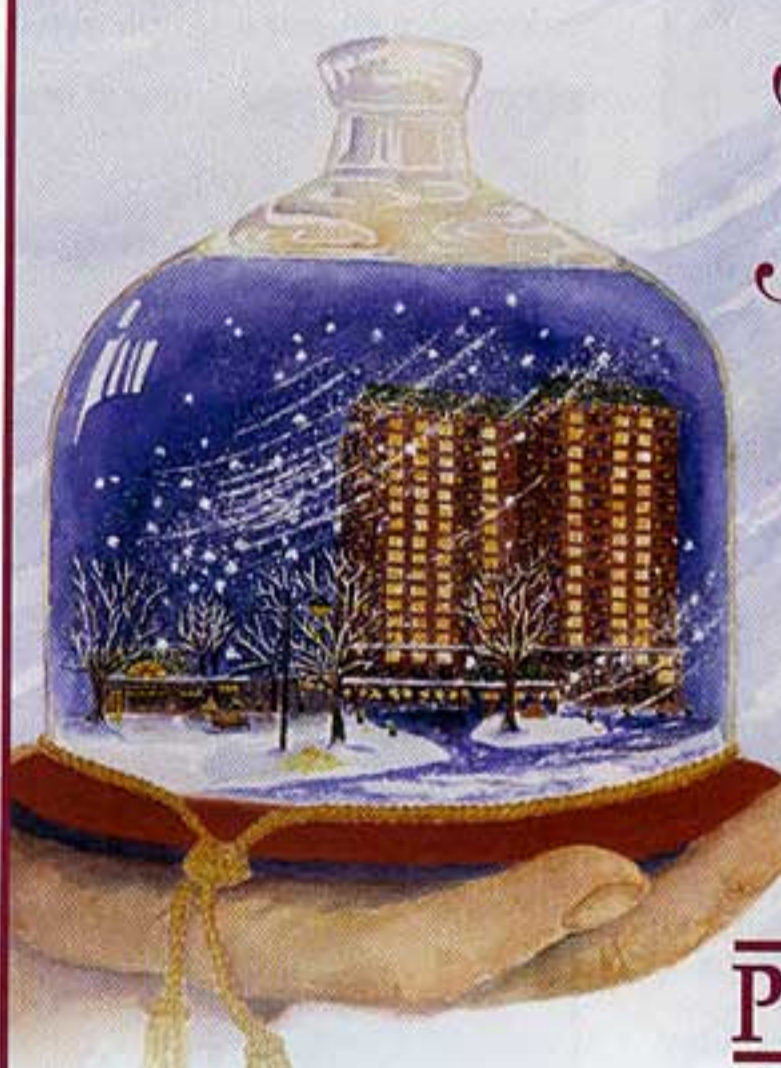
Colleen Smith, a contributor to Colorado Expression since 1996, also writes for a number of other publications, including The Denver Post and Denver Woman.



"The Brewton Family" 2006, oil on canvas, 34" x 47"

PORTRAITS by SUSAN GURRENTZ

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