

# **REVIEW: The freedom of abstract art is apparant at ARC works exhibit**

**By Keith Powers / Correspondent**

Posted Oct 2, 2017 at 12:29 PM

Updated Oct 2, 2017 at 12:29 PM

**If you go...**

**WHAT:** The Abstracted View

**WHERE:** ArcWorks Community Art Center, 22 Foster St., Peabody

**WHEN:** through Nov. 2

**TICKETS:** Free. Visit [www.arcworksart.org](http://www.arcworksart.org) or call 978-548-5855

Abstract art liberates. It lets the artist follow instincts, and not definitions. It lets the viewer feel like part of the process, and not the student kneeling at the feet of the master.

It lets the creation be something closer to what it wants to be, rather than following some rules it is bound to.

All these statements can be true, and standing in front of abstract work — especially a whole exhibition like “The Abstracted View,” showing through Nov. 2 at the ArcWorks Community Art Center in Peabody — can be liberating, exhilarating and baffling experience. Trying to parse it out is part of the thrill, and part of the challenge.

The juried show in the angled entryway at ArcWorks Community Art Center in Peabody shows about two dozen paintings, and some multi-media works. Entry was open, and the show was judged by Dean Nimmer, a painter, author and professor emeritus at Mass Art. Nimmer made fascinating choices that show a range of approaches — indeed, an entire range of notions of what actually constitutes “abstract” — and each of the works deserves attention.

Nimmer has selected several medalists as best in show, but in accompanying notes is quick to point out that these works “engaged my interest,” allowing that other works may engage other interests. It’s a simple point, but an appropriate one.

With that spirit in mind, several works stand out. Fortunately, Nimmer has chosen multiple works from several artists, eliminating the “one chance to judge” aspect of most group shows.

An atmospheric oil and pastel on paper by Alexey Makogonov, “Taconic Parkway,” runs right at the notion of what abstract art really is. Its label, and quasi-realistic image of an automobile on the road, confirms the matter-of-fact description of the title. Unrealistic angles, colorings and ambiguous proportions supply some suggestiveness. Abstract? Possibly. Certainly appealing, and well crafted.

Jeffrey Rezendre shows three large oils, “Map,” “Untitled,” and “Pure Abstraction,” which stand out on pure technique. Nothing really unifies these three works, except an unmistakable integrity in the artist’s visual language.

Shirley Guerriero’s mixed media “The Man” clearly takes a representational image and fictionalizes it into an idea — certainly one valid, recurring notion of what abstract could be. Chuck Guest’s large acrylic “The Storm” — Nimmer’s first place awardee — does that as well, not so much visually as in the combination of title and image.

The notion of titles in abstract works is both frustrating and inviting. A title can be “helpful” to the viewer, as in Guest’s work. It can also be limiting to the very idea that abstract art is somehow an investigation, not only into the visual approach of the artist, but possibly the artist’s psychological state as well.

Barbara Rafferty shows several ink/alcohol works, and in “Fascination” especially draws alluring ideas from those media. James Bostick also jumps some boundaries by both blowing glass pieces, and then photographing them — creating companion works but in different media.

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*Keith Powers covers music and the arts for GateHouse Media and WBUR’s ARTery. Follow [@PowersKeith](https://twitter.com/PowersKeith); email to [keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com](mailto:keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com)*





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