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ART REVIEW: Piepgras presents provocative show at SSU's Winfisky Gallery

On many levels, "Kalpa," a fascinating show of paintings by Leah Piepgras, rewards a visit to the Winfisky Gallery on the Salem State University campus.

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'Yellow Kalpa,' by Leah Piepgras

By Keith Powers / Correspondent

Posted Mar. 22, 2016 at 4:27 PM

SALEM
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If you go...

- WHAT:** Kalpa: Works by Leah Piepgras
- WHERE:** Winfisky Gallery, Ellison Campus Center, Salem State University
- WHEN:** through April 6



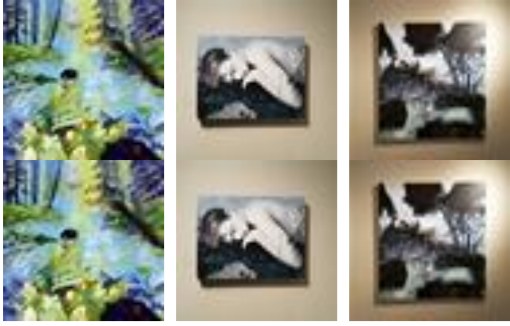
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'Yellow Kalpa,' by Leah Piepgras

Lastly, the sense of intellect. The exhibition's title (Kalpa is a Sanskrit word translating as

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“timeless”), and, at first glance, the magical nature of the work, lead viewers to believe that the subjects are framed in new-age, faux-spiritual tautologies. Far from it.

Examine these works, and their simple titles: “Where I Find the Answers.” “Grounding.” “Knowing Oblivion.” “Pieces of My Body from the Last Time.” All these provocative paintings stimulate internal conversation.

Piepgras posits human subjects in questioning or awakening poses. Her skin colors are chalky white — another beautiful aspect of her acrylics. But the chalky white skin tones, rather than invoking morbidity, appear to glow with an evening energy.

Take “Where I Find the Answers,” a large work, its central figure a female nude, seated against a rock. Her gaze is direct, at the viewer. In the background, the bend of a tree (and its color, and its texture), mimic the sitter’s drawn-up knees. A large white boulder gives her rest.

The meditative calm is external, and real. But the internal life seems full of possibilities.

Piepgras shows works in multiple sizes and shapes, adding variety to the small gallery. Long horizontals, squares large and small, and verticals pull the viewer through the exhibition.

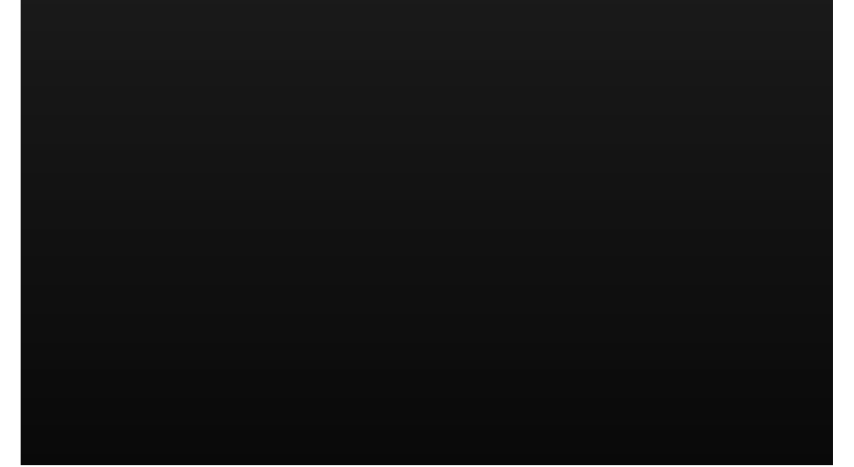
The title work, “Kalpa,” features a young, androgynous figure, bathed in bright yellow, posed seated in the woods. Energy fills the square, derived predominantly not from the striking figure, but from the misty rush sweeping a path through the fantasized woods behind the figure. The youth’s gaze transfixes, hypnotizing the viewer away from the action in the background.

Humans in all the works are idealized, nature is barely realistic and colors are hyperextended into a magical visual palette. The combination proves contagious — none of it seems real, all of it seems possible.

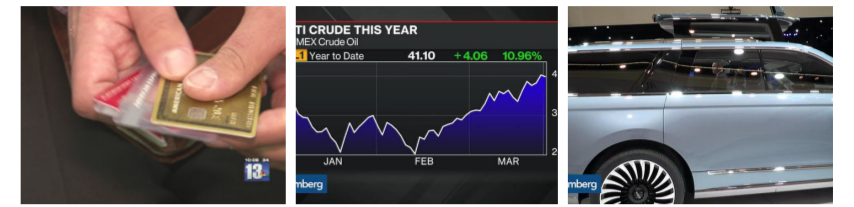
“Kalpa: Paintings by Leah Piepgras,” is on view through April 6 at Winfisky Gallery in the Ellison Campus Center on the Salem State campus. Admission is free. Visit www.salemstate.edu or call 978-978-542-7890.

Keith Powers covers music and the arts for Gatehouse Media and WBUR’s ARTery. Follow @PowersKeith; email to keithmichaelpowers@gmail.com

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	Wellspring House Adult Education Classes (ALI 1) - Spring Session					8:30 am
Wellspring House						
Veterans Writing Workshop						10:00 am
Office of Veterans' Services						
Income Tax Advice						1:15 pm
Town Hall						
	College Prep Math Course					6:15 pm
Wellspring House						

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Wellspring House						
Veterans Writing Workshop						10:00 am
Office of Veterans' Services						
Income Tax Advice						1:15 pm
Town Hall						
	College Prep Math Course					6:15 pm
Wellspring House						

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