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INTO VIEW

## Offbeat landscapes come to life

### Denver-trained painter explores the curious juncture of nature and suburban sprawl

By Robert L. Pincus

ART CRITIC

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One of the perennially engaging things about visual artists is that they will see things in ordinary surroundings that others overlook. Kim Reasor looks at one of San Diego's main freeway interchanges and thinks about 12th-century architecture.

"They're like Gothic arches," she says of the towering support structure of the I-805 in Mission Valley. She's discussing one of the pictures in her studio, which centers on the parking lot of Dave & Buster's, with the freeway high overhead.

"I call it the church of Dave & Buster's," quips Reasor, riffing on her line of reference about Gothic architecture.

This painting, true to form for Reasor, takes an ordinary scene and gives it a new slant. She's been adapting this approach to a range of subjects around San Diego, from the lush reflection of illuminated signs on a strip-mall parking lot to a glassy swimming pool butting up against a fence and cars at twilight.

"I am drawn to offbeat landscapes," says Reasor. "I've become more and more interested in the clash between nature and suburban sprawl."

A selection of Reasor's recent work will go on view Friday in a three-person exhibition at the relatively new Patrick Moore Gallery (2400 Kettner Blvd.) in Little Italy. It's her first show since 2006.

City scenes provided her breakthrough. More specifically, scenes from the older part of Denver's downtown.

The 41-year-old artist spent most of her formative years in Denver and by the early '90s had become serious about her painting, enrolling at the Art Students League there.

"I was learning from very good people in the illustration tradition of Howard Pyle," says Reasor. "This lasted for a couple of years, and I'm still very thankful for this training."

Toward the end of that time, though, she was becoming restless about executing seemingly endless variations on the still-life and other genres. And that's when she had a revelatory moment.



PEGGY PEATTIE / Union-Tribune

Kim Reasor, who came here from Denver four years ago, finds ordinary locales around San Diego to be thick with visual and symbolic interest, both of which she evokes in her paintings of urban and suburban sites.

“One hot day we were painting a nude,” recalls Reasor, “and I looked out the window and saw a beautiful twilight on the edge of Denver's skid row. I actually hauled my easel down the stairs and started painting.”

Thus began her long, continuing love affair with the cityscape, which has extended to suburban and desert scenes.

Though she felt she had found herself as an artist, Reasor still wanted to earn a degree, which she did at the Metropolitan State College of Denver – finishing her MFA in 1997.

She studied art history as much as studio art. None of the knowledge she gained altered her commitment to the cityscape, but it did refine her approach.

“If I was merely to copy the scenes I photographed for my paintings,” says Reasor, “I might as well be a photographer. I concluded that I was after my experience of a place and the photograph was not the sum total.”

Reasor established herself in Denver, and she is still represented by the William Havu Gallery there. In 2003, she relocated to San Diego for personal reasons.

Her husband-to-be, David Lipson, was offered a teaching position in the Biology Department at San Diego State University. He came here from Denver in 2001. They were friends at the time, but on his visits back to Denver, their relationship turned romantic and ultimately Reasor moved here to be with him. They married shortly thereafter.

The move has also been good for her art, Reasor says.

“People have been so open to my work out here. It's not like I wasn't in Denver, but I appreciate how San Diegans are open to seeing the city in new ways in my work.”

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