

## **“The Art of Jazz in E. J. Gold’s Jazz Art”**

by Kirk Silsbee

The occasion of the first West Coast edition of the Jazz Journalists Association Awards show on June 21 found the Jazz Bakery uniquely transformed. The Culver City jazz space had life-size screens set up in the lobby that added bold color to the soft grays of the existing décor. Heidelberg Editions International, which represents a collective of artists in Northern California’s Grass Valley, had assembled the walk-through show that night. The screens were joined canvases that depicted jazz images: painted figures playing instruments in bold colors and expressionist renderings. These jazz-themed paintings are part of a small movement whose presence had been felt at January’s Jazz Educator’s Conference in New York and some Northern California concerts.

While the awards and the music inside the performing space confirmed the best of the jazz community (Gerald Wilson and Horace Silver were among the honorees, performers included Bennie Maupin’s band, vocalist Dwight Tribble, reedman Vinny Golia and pianist Wayne Peet, and bassist Roberto Miranda’s group), the evening’s mood was set by the lobby display. Large-scale oil paintings of jazz musicians stood like sentinels throughout the lobby. These were images of instrumentalists, not of specific players yet vaguely familiar poses just the same. The paintings were dark-hued with murky purples and greens, accented with chrome yellows or scarlet red streaks of color. While several artists were represented at the Bakery that night, all of them work under the aegis of the Grass Valley Graphic Graphics Group.

Grass Valley is a small, semi-rural community North of San Francisco. The collective is a loose federation of 20 artists who often have vastly different visions of what their work is yet the work comfortably coexists under the Heidelberg umbrella. At the Bakery, Beverly Korenwaser, standing behind a table with printouts and cards, spoke about the collective, which she represents. “There are 20 different artists who are in this group,” says the smiling, pixieish Korenwaser. “A lot of them are musicians. They’re responsible for some large-scale works that have been used to create stage environments for concerts. Wynton Marsalis played a concert with his band in the Grass Valley Veteran’s Memorial Building and one of our painters, E.J. Gold, painted a large backdrop of jazz images. Wynton loved it and said it felt much more vibrant than the usual concert stage. The work reflects the essence of jazz. It doesn’t enhance the music--it is the music.”

The 63 year-old Gold is a veteran of many artistic disciplines and intellectual pursuits. His roots go back to his native Woodstock, to New York’s fabled Cedar Bar (home base for the Abstract Expressionists), to L.A. in the ‘60s, to Northern California (Gold’s intrepid life has been chronicled in *More Color...Less Soul*, published by Gateways Fine Art).

“What I’m doing now is jazz art,” says the exuberant Gold from his home. “I’ve spent a lot of time making music, producing music, photographing musicians, writing about music so it’s just natural that I should be making art about jazz.” Gold’s ceramics

have been collected by the Clinton White House and accompanied the traveling “Rhapsodies in Black: Art of the Harlem Renaissance” show of 1998.

“I play music every day and I make art every day,” says Gold. “There’s something that happens in both art and music that can only be described as magic. And, of course, both of them use color, line, intensity and contrast. I’m trying to make a fusion of the art and the music.”

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