

The *mysterious* in the mundane

Robert Nott ■ The New Mexican

Carol Anthony creates still lifes that remind you that life doesn't have to be still.



Above, *Postcard: Zamas Tulum Beach, Mexico*, oil stick crayon on paper, 8 x 8 inches

Top, *Postcard: Prague's Ancient Arch*, oil stick crayon on paper, 7 x 8 1/2 inches

In a world where we feel compelled to articulate everything we're feeling, she pays homage to moments of silence that can, if navigated properly, embody passion and compassion, hope and love, loss and acceptance. And all this in the space of a postcard, more or less.

Postcard: Somewhere in Time, an exhibit of Anthony's oil-crayon paintings, opens with a reception from 5 to 7 p.m. Saturday, June 14, at Gerald Peters Gallery and runs through July 19 in conjunction with *Playing Loose*, a show of new works by John Dewe Mathews.

Anthony takes the ordinary — an egg, a roll of toilet paper, a dog bone or a bottle — and makes it mysterious, leading the viewer to consider not taking those things for granted. "For me they're gentle reminders of daily maintenance," Anthony said of her paintings during an interview in her Santa Fe studio. "I hope they help people take the time to take another look at something that is very simple and very mundane in our lives — but something that can help them be better."

Anthony wouldn't say much more about the paintings than that, and that's OK. Spending a couple of hours with her in her studio-home made me realize that the pieces come out of that wonderfully crazy place called life.

In Anthony's case, that life includes a trio of adopted dogs, a clothesline of Victorian-type garb hanging over her bed, Museum of Spanish Colonial Art director Stuart Ashman's shoe on a cookie sheet (it's a piece of art and edible only to the eyes), cocktail onions in her refrigerator (that's one of many places where she gets creative ideas), and an underground condo of bunnies who make short work of her flower garden.

In Anthony's work — and perhaps in her life — nothing fits and yet everything has its place. It seems appropriate, then, that she paints postcards. Don't we tend to stick them on our fridge and then forget about them if they fall and slide under the stove? Wherever they are, they belong, and if we come across them years later, they have the power to bring back joyful memories of places and people.

Using Craypas (oil stick crayon) and enamel, Anthony makes postcard pieces the size of Kleenex-box tops in a style that could be described as expressionist, abstract or, more likely, Anthonyist.

The subject matter varies. *Postcard: Beach Sunset* is just that: an image of a pale orange environment, complete with stamps (two, in this case). *Postcard Bowl* features a sun-gleamed bowl large enough to soak one's head in. *New Mexico* spotlights a trio of Milk-Bones hanging from a red string (one for each of her dogs, perhaps?).

Anthony has a thing for eggs — eggs on the plate, eggs on the table, eggs in a bird's nest. This could mean one of two things: a celebration of new beginnings or a hankering for two over easy. Asked about this interpretation, Anthony smiled and replied, "It's both."

While the pieces are often dark and suggest something disquieting, as in

Postcard: Prague's Ancient Arch, in which you can just about feel the cobblestone and smell the history behind an archway entrance, they can also be light and reassuring, as in *Postcard: Beach, Maya Tulum*, a nocturnal portrait of a seashore that reminds us that we need to take more moonlight swims — and leave our swimsuits on the beach.

The pieces exude a quirky humor, an understated whimsy that makes you wonder whether you're allowed to smile at them or not. You are, in fact, permitted to do just that, and keep in mind that Anthony's father was Jack Murray Anthony, a cartoonist for *The New Yorker* whose work incorporated slapstick with the sublime.

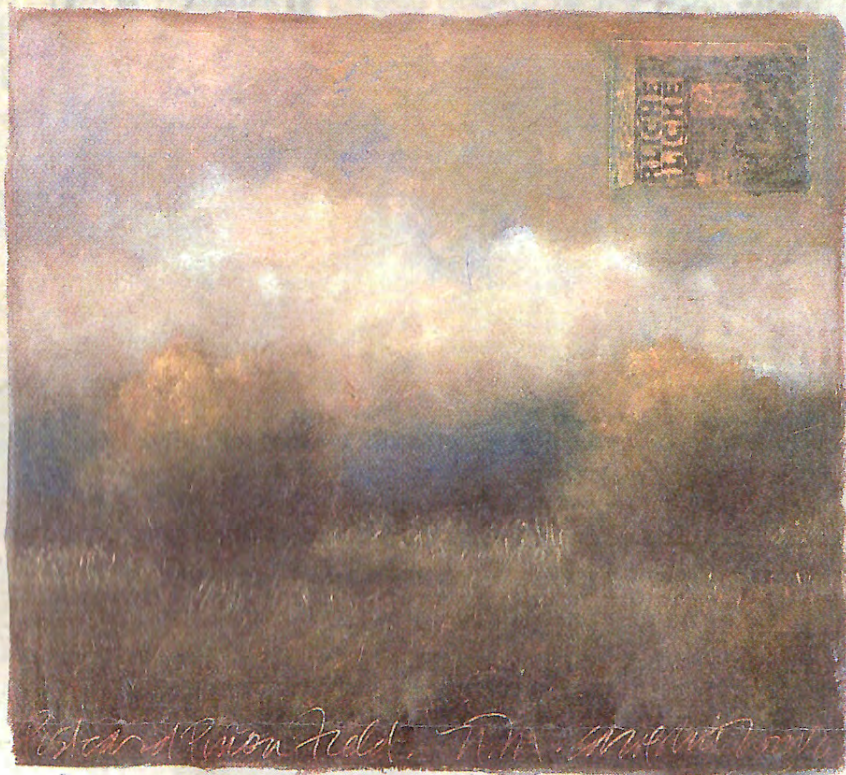
Anthony and her twin sister, Elaine (who died of cancer in 1996), were drawn to the arts in childhood. She earned her bachelor's degree in art from the Rhode Island School of Design and has

focused on painting for about 25 years. She moved to New Mexico in 1990.

Anthony is big on having viewers run their fingers over her paintings. She wants us to see the sea, feel the contours of the bowl and pinch the toilet paper between our fingers. There's a peaceful darkness to all of them, as if they straddle that line between life and death, letting us know that it's OK to pass from one side to the other.

In her artist's statement, written out in longhand, Anthony said her works are "the footnotes of that longer love letter that we don't need to write ... the backyard scenarios of forgotten dreams and delayed promises. They are the deep and briefly felt sentiments of the everyday world, speaking to those special and unsung places where we've been before — or where we wish we were now."

That, perhaps, is the real power of Anthony's work — making you want to revisit those places you've seen or consider going to those places you've always



Above, *Postcard: Piñon Field, NM*, oil stick crayon on panel, 11 x 12 inches

Left, *Prague Postcard: Fried Egg Special*, oil stick crayon on paper, 9 x 6 inches



wanted to visit but never got around to. And not just literal places, like a sunset-drenched beach or a field of piñon trees (though those are nice locales to start) but places in the heart and soul where you're required to invest an emotional piece of yourself and maybe, just maybe, pay a price for happiness.

Mathews' snapshots of fun

If Carol Anthony's work asks you to slow down and stop long enough to at least see the roses, if not smell them, then John Dewe Mathews' art is a call to party.

The people in his oil paintings, watercolor-on-paper works and monotypes are singing, dancing, playing music and/or swinging their hips to the beat. The brush strokes are whimsically zippy, like the celebration across the way that you haven't been invited to but know you'd be welcome at all the same.

Snapshots of fun — maybe that's the best way to describe Mathews' work. You can check his pieces out in the exhibit *Playing Loose*, running in tandem with Carol Anthony's exhibition at Gerald Peters Gallery, 1011 Paseo de Peralta, 954-5700. Opening reception is 5-7 p.m. Saturday, June 14, and the show runs through July 19. ◀

DETAILS

- ▼ *Postcard: Somewhere in Time*, new works by Carol Anthony
- ▼ Opening reception 5-7 p.m. Saturday, June 14 (in conjunction with *Playing Loose*, works by John Dewe Mathews)
- ▼ Gerald Peters Gallery, 1001 Paseo de Peralta, 954-5700