

Arlington Arts Center Shows Off New Look

Artists-in-residence and a new exhibit of Latin American artists create a lively show.

BY STEFAN CORNIBERT
THE CONNECTION

Art lovers got a chance to stroll through the Arlington Arts Center near Virginia Square Saturday night during its grand reopening on the heels of a \$2.5 million renovation. The new look, coupled with a new exhibit of Latin American artists and the studios of its artists-in-residence, hint that the center is taking a new direc-

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—Evan Reed

tion and breaking new ground.

"This was a long time coming," said the center's President, Diane Smith, during the opening. "It's a real show of how strongly the arts are supported here. There are very few communities that have something like this."

Renovations on the arts center began in 2001 after voters approved a \$2 million bond for the project. The center's building, constructed in 1910, was in dire need of repairs. Along with the renovations, the center got some help from Susana Leval, director of New York City's El Museo Del Barrio — a museum devoted to Hispanic and Latin American artists — who consulted on the arrangement of the exhibits. Until November of 2004, its resident artists couldn't access

their studio space. Now presenting its first show of the year, Smith said, the center remains a place where the community can get in touch with the local arts scene.

"People in the neighborhood have had to bear the construction but we're lucky that they've really embraced us and this building," she said. "So many people from the neighborhood have come by. We're seeing a lot more young people."

THE OPENING WAS a veritable who's-who of Arlington's public figures. U.S. Rep. Jim Moran (D-8th) was in attendance, along with Lt. Gov. Tim Kaine, Dels. Adam Ebbin (D-49) and Bob Brink (D-48). Members of the County Board and School Board were also on hand, as were state Sens. Patsy Ticer (D-30) and Mary Margaret Whipple (D-31). Yet the draw for most was not the guest list. It was the artists themselves, who invited visitors into the center's small studio galleries to explore their creations.

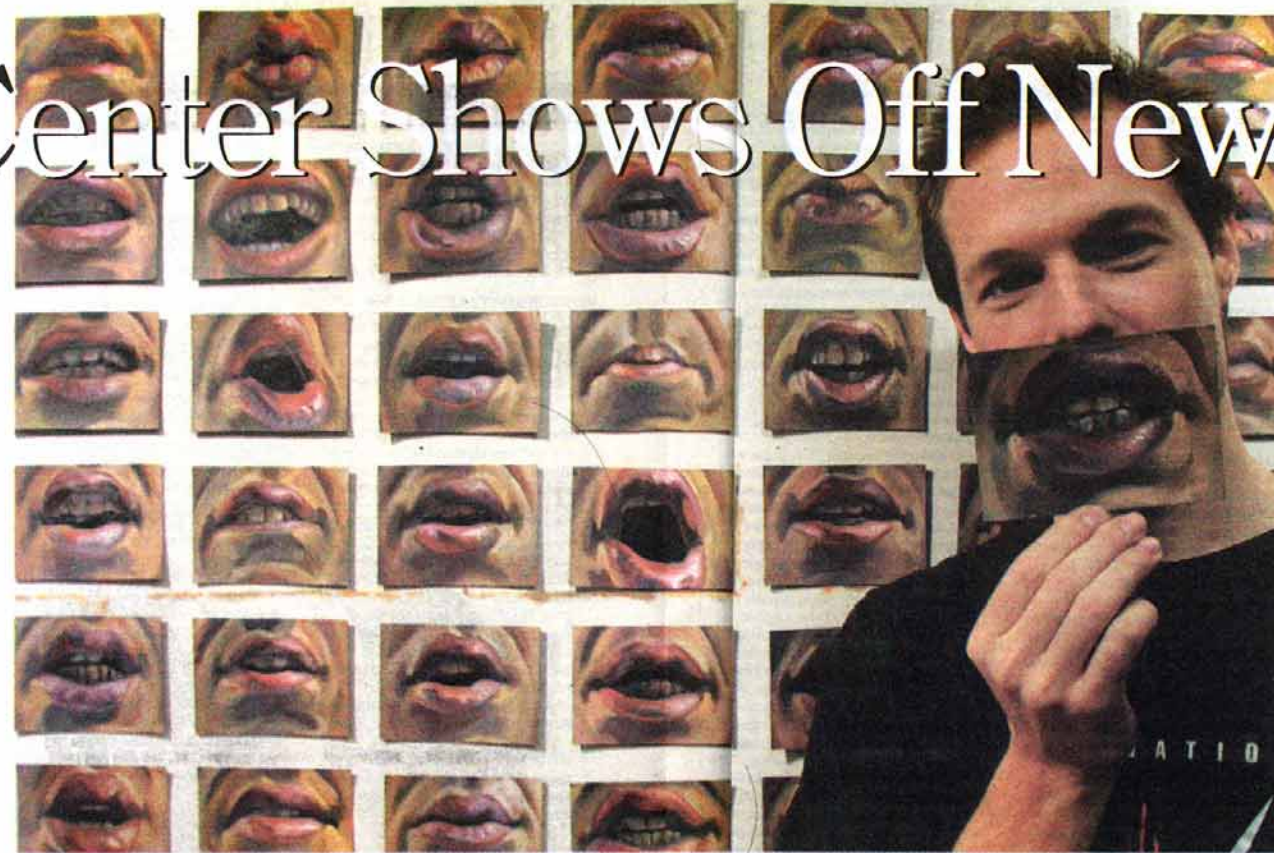
Some, like the abstract work of Alexandria artist Gisele Miller, stood right on the easel. Others, like Evan Reed's giant, cubic design fashioned from black netting, filled a room.

"The idea came from the material itself," said Reed, an Arlington resident. "There are a lot of metaphorical qualities that come with it. A lot of it came out of just playing with rope and wire, linear materi-

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Mary Clare Sterrett studies "Jefferson at Night".



Scott Hutchison poses with one of his trademark expressions. Each one of these small paintings was used to animate his mouth frame by frame for a video display.

als, to see what came out of that." Miller's abstract work, she said, explores the interplay between color, form and human interpretation. Though much of her mingles fiery reds and yellows, cool blues and cold black, Miller used shaded charcoal for one of her most prominent pieces in Saturday's exhibition.

"Black and white is a limited color selection, which allows you to concentrate on other elements like shape and composition," she said. "It tests your imagination."

Multimedia artist Scott Hutchison is bringing his own talents as a painter to life through video. His display mixes his own self portraits and paintings of his facial expressions with video and stop-motion animation to create an

intriguing study of images and body language. The project, he said, is one that he has wanted to do for a long time.

"I've always wanted to do animation," said Hutchison. "I'm trying to incorporate painting into video. Part of it starts from just playing in the studio. It just evolves from there."

Fresh from painting, Gisele Miller stands with her charcoal piece. It was inspired, she said, while she was drawing the shapes of two pears.

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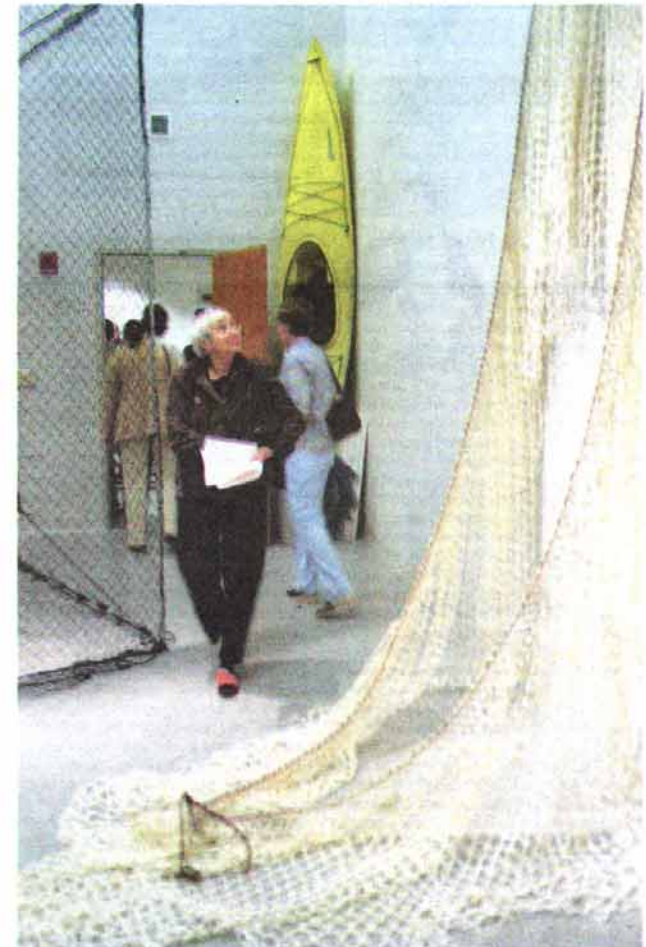
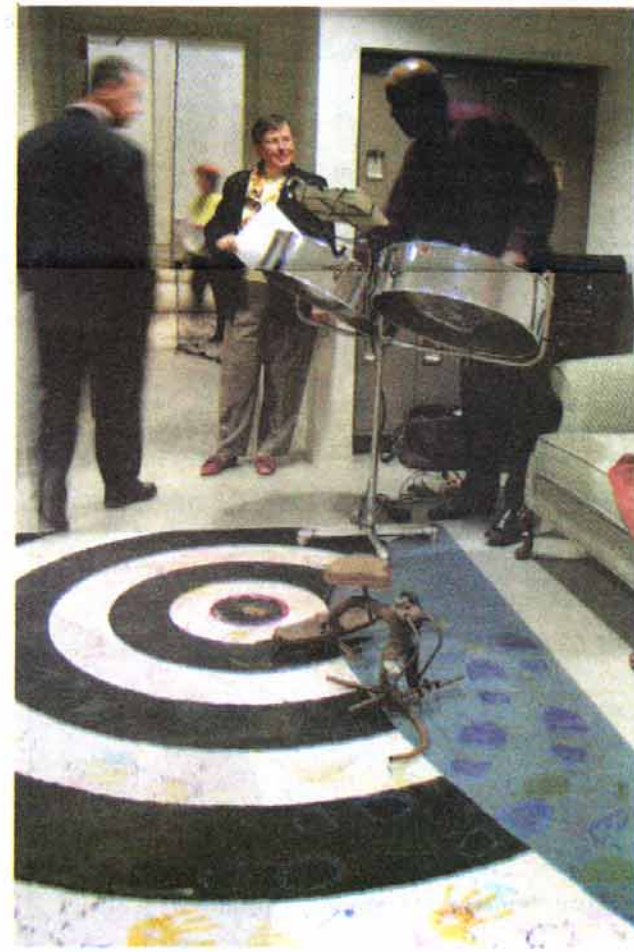
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LEVAL'S HAND IN the center's 2005 debut is most evident in its latest main exhibit, "Art with Accent," a presentation of work from Latin American artists living in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States.

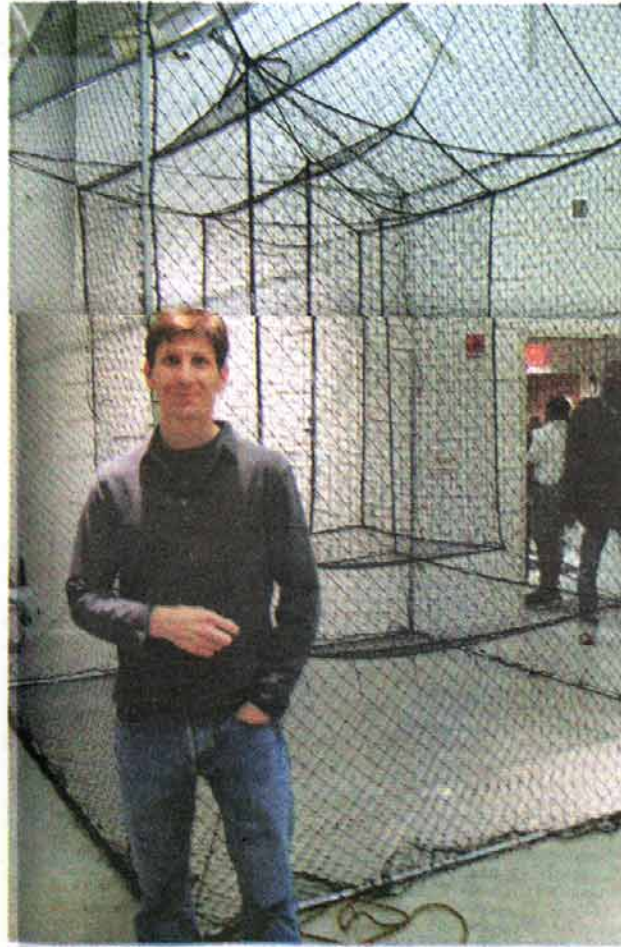
"Janus-like, bicultural artists look back to their country of origin as they move on in their adopted country," Leval said. "As they evolve and adapt to their life here, they record, analyze and explore their selves in transition, caught between worlds, cultures and languages. This exhibition captures the moments of that adaptive evolution."

The exhibit features 71 works of contemporary art from 19 artists. In conjunction with the exhibit, the center houses a series of displays from solo artists in its seven galleries. History fans will also enjoy the sight of three restored Tiffany stained glass windows. Hidden under plywood boards for more than 30 years, the windows were uncovered in 2001 during the demolition of the Abbey Mausoleum, overlooking the Pentagon. The windows, commissioned in 1933, are the product of Louis Comfort Tiffany, a master glazier from Queens, N.Y.

Steel drummer Lenny Rogers, from Trinidad, plays for patrons.



Gallery patrons marvel at Evan Reed's gigantic webs of netting and wire.



Evan Reed's untitled figure in black netting occupies almost all of his studio.

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