

## Art takes an abstract view of life

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**Barbara Martin's whimsical work on display at the Chehalem Cultural Center through the first week of August**

Barbara Martin will soon bring her Super Ply art show and its characters in a show at the Chehalem Cultural Center that continues through Aug. 4.

Her art depicts abstract creepy, funny or cute characters and is constructed using finger-painting with acrylics, oils, pastels and pencil. Sometimes, during the process, creatures will emerge from the canvas.

"It's just weird marks and I have no idea at all of what it will become," Martin said. "I turn the board and turn the board and set it down and walk away and I come back. My favorite is to find eyeballs or a profile. I will look and see what is there, I will see two eyeballs maybe five, a nose or a chin or anything that sort of suggests. It happens organically. Sometimes there will be these creatures that say, 'I really like cake.'"

Some of the titles of her work express the characters on the canvas. Sometimes it is a simple word, other times a few more. "End of the Day" depicts two wide-eyed somewhat distorted faces nestled in between two champagne glasses. "Don't be the Bunny" reflects an Easter bunny holding a basket of eggs with beaver teeth, professor-style glasses and a big fluffy tail.



A few of her paintings are in the style of Picasso, with distorted faces with the eyes a bit uneven or the mouth off center. The title "Mirror Mirror" can be understood with its square head, garbled teeth and upside-down mountains.

Martin said her process is almost like a ritual: She puts black paint on her left hand and squishes the paint between her fingers. Then she makes something like a painting doodle on a black piece of paper. It is black on black and difficult to see what is being created. Then she turns the paper over and presses it onto the board. This becomes the starting point.

During a class in Portland she began learning about values, that relationship between dark and light elements.

"When I went home I said that I do need to work on values, all artists really want to do that," Martin said. "It is a basic skill you can never be too good at. I thought it was an interesting way to do it and I kept going and in a few months, I saw that I had some really interesting paintings and I just kept going."

Martin not only paints characters on plywood, but also on large canvases. A few of her colorful, big and bold paintings will be on display at the CCC that depict shapes and tell their own kind of story.

"I love color. Some people call me a colorist, which is why the black and whites are so interesting," Martin said. "I came from a line of storytellers and herbalists and I feel like when I paint, I am tapping into that kind of universal web."