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VISUAL ARTS & ARCHITECTURE: Color unfurled

The joy is palpable in notable Georgia artist's swirling, curving hues.

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REVIEW

Mixed Media and Works on Paper: Herbert Creecy

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Through July 14. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays; noon-5 p.m. Sundays. Prices: \$1,500-\$30,000. Mason Murer Fine Art, 199 Armour Drive, Atlanta. 404-879-1500, www.masonmurer.com.

Verdict: Combines breadth and beauty

Color and movement predominate in a tasty new showing of paintings by one of Georgia's most notable artists, the late Herbert Creecy. Works on view at Mason Murer Fine Art include examples spanning 20 years of abstract exploration.

Half a dozen large paintings are among the most striking images to be seen. They present variations on a theme of overall patterning, offering rich contrasts in curvy form.

One such untitled canvas teems with thick, swirling brush strokes. Rich ruby tones poke through twists of white against a deep blue background. Another painting unfurls its ribbonlike forms in a tranquilizing scheme of rose, gray and taupe. Additional works capture a breadth of moods in wintry whites, monochromatic charcoals and vibrant purples. A dynamic collision of greens and black, also untitled, offers an electrified palette with an active canvas of hot hues and intersecting angles.

"The Backside of Chaos — Red" is an enormous composition of continuous, curling shapes. Part of a series completed between 1990 and 1999, its meandering coils create hypnotic rhythms in red and white. Equally fascinating are "Chaos" variations in both black and blue. A closer look reveals Creecy's affinity for subtle layering, the sheen of encaustic and areas where the texture of raw canvas plays into the sensuality of the artwork as a whole.

While his luxuriant, looping forms of the 1990s recall Brice Marden's equally sensual, more streamlined patterning, Creecy's forms are lush and dense. His no-holds-barred manner of applying paint — drips, splatters, splotches, dribbles and an air compressor to gently blow material into feathery forms — enhances the intensity of both large and small works. His gestural approach, energized surfaces and experimentation in style garnered him the label of abstract expressionist, with his work most often compared to Jackson Pollock's.

Paper pieces provide additional insight as intimate examples of Creecy's development, virtuosity and his flirtation with figuration tucked within abstraction.

Raised in Atlanta, Creecy spent much of his life in Barnesville. He lived and worked in a converted cotton warehouse surrounded by his paintings, drawings, found objects and sculptures.

Recognized early as a rising star, he gained prominence just out of art school. Sustaining a successful 40-year career, his work is included in the Corcoran, the Whitney, the High and the Norton, among other prestigious museums.

Herbert Creecy's legacy remains extensive — widely variable, lyrical, intuitive and passionate. The joy he must have felt in his art-making process is surely contagious in this pleasurable show.