

VISUAL ARTS

Spruill pairs wistful with mysterious

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REVIEW

“Solace” (Lisa Alembik) and **“The Inner Voice of Color”** (Albino Mattioli)

Through Sept. 6. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays.

Prices: \$650-\$3,000 (Alembik); \$500-\$1,900 (Mattioli).

Spruill Gallery, 4681 Ashford Dunwoody Road, Atlanta. 770-394-4019; www.spruillarts.org.

Bottom line: Lisa Alembik effectively re-creates loss and remembrance in a series of wistful paintings and drawings, while Albino Mattioli’s vibrant abstractions offer a more mysterious tale for the viewer to decipher.

In an effective juxtaposition of styles, two very different artists re-create personal narratives in both figurative and abstract works on view at Spruill Gallery.

In “Solace,” a collection of cityscapes, tiny sketches and small oils, Lisa Alembik mines private territory that touches on universal themes. Suggesting personal stories of a different sort, Albino Mattioli offers abstract paintings on board, paper and canvas in “Inner Voice of Color.” Here’s a quick look at each:



In this partial installation view of Lisa Alembik’s paintings, architectural fragments and landscapes include bridges, vacated rooms and abstracted scenes that echo loss and remembrance.

Lisa Alembik: ‘Solace’

Drawing primarily from her grandfather’s old photographs, Alembik chronicles loss and diaspora. She uses architectural imagery culled largely from European locales, as a mix of geographic references add to the emotional power of her ambiguous settings. Churches, streets and buildings appear emptied of their inhabitants.

“Opi Steeple: Warsaw, Afghanistan, Rome” uses slightly wavering lines and tipping walls (echoing influences of van Gogh) to effectively unsettle the viewer. “Meeting Corner: Palermo-quattro Canti, Bialystok, Decatur” rings a similarly somber bell. Its deserted structures stand like markers of lives that have disappeared, leaving little trace.

An orderly rectangular arrangement of more than 100 diminutive paintings reinforces Alembik’s theme. Compositions range from recognizable (houses, bridges, interiors) to abstracted (shadowy figures, flushed skies),

each playing its part in forming a larger community of vacated spaces. While a number of the paintings are lovely, they are less evenly executed than Alembik’s drawings.

The exhibition as a whole (including delicate works in a trio of artist books) is both quiet and bittersweet — an intimate invocation of those who have fled or have been chased out of their homelands.



Albino Mattioli's "Her Way Out" offers few clues to the motivation in an emotionally charged abstraction.

Albino Mattioli: 'The Inner Voice of Color'

Mattioli's 18 abstract paintings are strident expressions of emotion, hinting at roller-coaster rides of struggle and commotion. Scattered figurative elements and titles offer keys to their secrets.

"Take Me to the Fear" is a quirky, appealing example. Two cartoon creatures walk hand in hand toward the mouth of a beast. The smaller character bears two heads, each turned in opposite directions as the scene plays out against an energized yellow surface.

"Her Way Out" traps a different sort of creature inside a compartmentalized space along with an empty chair and, in cartoon shorthand, no dialogue. Escapes are visible, but for some

reason, inaccessible. Mattioli maps this enigmatic scenario against rich swaths of reds and blues, which he layers over regions of jagged mark-making.

The Roman-born artist clearly takes pleasure in the act of painting. Energy surges through his confident brush strokes and lines, while graffiti-style surfaces fully exploit the textural qualities of board, paper, paint and other materials.

Mattioli carefully constructs layers as he manipulates large fields of vivid hues — colliding planes of saturated reds, pinks, crystalline blues and golden yellows. Color and space serve as an effective counterbalance to quizzical scenes in a style reminiscent of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Mimmo Paladino.

With only clues to the underlying stories that inspired these psychologically charged paintings, we nonetheless sense urgency and vitality. Mattioli's deft handling of material, color and composition keeps us viscerally and intellectually engaged.



"Take Me to the Fear" by Albino Mattioli suggests a confrontation, reinforced by a confident style and vigorous brushwork.