

WEST VALLEY



Friday, December 15, 2006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: George Palovich
623/972-0635, ext 25 8:00am—noon
gpalovich@wvam.org

ART MUSEUM

**“Icons and Muses”
The Art of Tomas Lasansky
“Reflections From Within”
Charlie Emmert
March 9 - May 6, 2007**

There was a time when an artist’s portrait of someone was the only way of recording that visage for posterity and subsequently it was usually reserved for royalty or the rich. When the camera was invented and eventually became ubiquitous, everyone became a “portraitist”. But the place for portraits by an artist has not been usurped. Two forms of portraiture now exist; that which is commissioned, a commercial effort, and a more expressive form done for the artist rather than a patron. The line between the two is not sharp. It often blurs as artists from Picasso to Wyeth portray their friends and family with sensitivity and passion and notables seek them out for portraits as well.

Artists Tomas Lasansky and Charlie Emmert are showing works this spring at West Valley Art Museum, all portraits, essentially. The portraits are of two types, however. One deals with people and personages no longer living and of considerable reputation or notoriety. The other is of models and friends in the artists’ circle. In the case of the first; without the live person present to interact with the artists, how does a viable expression about that person come to light? Lasansky and Emmert resolve this dilemma by steeping themselves in everything they can unearth about the person they are about to depict. When satisfied that they have enough information, both visual and factual, they proceed. This was the thrust of Lasansky’s last show at West Valley Art Museum; paintings of Native Americans. He continues this theme in the “Icons” part of his exhibition. Emmert is new to West Valley Art Museum exhibitions. Until recently, those living in the Midwest have had firsthand viewing of Charlie’s works. Faust Gallery, in Scottsdale, introduced her work to the Southwest. For her the journey taken with her subjects explores an inner realm that is personal to the artist. By exploiting various media through layering she delves deeply into a contemplative state. Interestingly, Lasansky’s approach utilizing collage and his own brand of layering carries just

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as much psychological punch; it's just rendered differently.

In the second type, artist and model connect to create the "Muses" part of Lasansky's show and a few of Emmert's pieces. Here the interaction is real, palpable. We sense the fragility or the power in the face and body language of the models as they gaze at us directly, challenging us to read their innermost thoughts and feelings. Lasansky's eye doesn't allow for "prettifying" his subjects and neither does Emmert's. The subjects are there for us to meet and get to know on the artists' and models' terms. Of his work Lasansky has said; "I've been truly inspired by our greatest leaders, artists and thinkers, however, I'll never be able to completely forgo the use of live models. The model is the muse that breathes new life into my work."

Color has always been the primary component of Emmert's portraits. "Color," she says, corresponds to the complexity of life".

Both exhibitions are powerful, relying on the psychological connections with the subjects that visitors to the exhibition will make and respond to.

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“Charlie” Tomas Lasansky



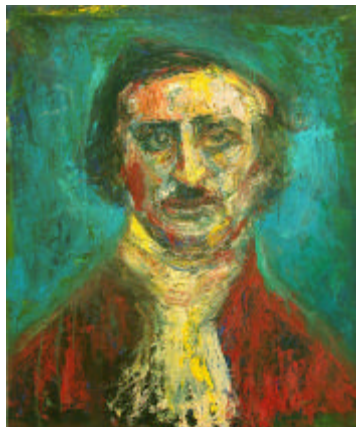
“Picasso” Tomas Lasansky



“Geronimo” Tomas Lasansky



“Einstein III” Charlie Emmert



“Poe” Charlie Emmert



“Blue Moon” Charlie Emmert

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