

# Emotion on CANVAS

Randall Teal brings his passion and commitment to an array of artistic outlets

By Sara Jarrett  
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Hanging in front of the wine-colored, decorative curtain inside the University coffee shop, the images draw attention. Students waiting for their morning coffee, afternoon fix or late night tune-up, can't help but be drawn to the stirring quality of the artist's visions.

Their lack of detail somehow makes them more descriptive. It's as if the true essence of a single thought exists in each one.

Randall Teal, creator of the 32 paintings, is a graduate student in the School of Architecture and Allied Arts, and a man of many interests. The guitarist, pianist, singer and painter grew up surrounded by the paintings of his mother, a retired counselor who used art as therapy, so Teal's curiosity of the arts was piqued at an early age.

The 28-year-old eclecticist borrowed his mother's acrylic paints seven years ago and eventually graduated to oils. His work is now regularly showcased in the Eugene area, and in addition to local coffee shops he has had exhibits at the Laverne Krause Gallery in Lawrence Hall.

"He's quite surprising," says Alison Snyder, assistant professor in the architecture department, who served as Teal's adviser for the paintings in The Buzz. "He doesn't tell you what he's working on, and then this whole body of work pops out. For instance, I had no idea that he was painting until about halfway through the project."

With an undergraduate degree in psychology, an interest in design and a background in observing the healing power of art in therapy, Teal sees his craft from many unique perspectives. In fact, he was torn between pursuing a master's degree in architecture and following in his mother's footsteps. His final decision to pursue design over art therapy stems from his need for "a bigger theatre to practice in," he admits.

"Art and design is a part of me," he says. "Exploring creative ability within constraints is also psychologically interesting."

While a lot of artists don't like putting boundaries around their work, Teal is not put off by the concept. While his process is sometimes to literally see what will happen if he picks up a paint brush during different emotional states, his work is often more structured than that.

"While he's trying to work out his own theories [of art and design], he goes through a lot of trial and error," Snyder says.

When Teal consciously decides to explore a certain emotion, he says that a painting can take months to perfect. That may sound like a long time, but Teal is quick to point out that it's months of "intense spurts," rather than constantly working.

The time he spends using this process is evident in the layers of colors and textures in much of his work. Mostly abstract in design, Teal's paintings have both striking and calming characteristics.

"Across Space and Time," for instance, was inspired by the innovative, electronic musician John Cage, who once said that lines represent the interconnectedness of people in space and time. The painting is memorable not only because of the layers of burnt orange hues but also because of the linear black lines painted over the top. Aromas of humanity linger between the analytical designs.

"This one took me forever," Teal says, as he gazes at his creation. The layers represent inspiration — a notion that to him is like "brushing information on information."

Sometimes the process of making art helps him resolve an upsetting emotional state. Before painting "Writing on the Wall," Teal says he was very energetic and frustrated and in a confused state of mind.

By the time the art piece was finished,

however, he was no longer upset. His descriptions of that process suggest that painting usually has such cathartic effects for him.

Sometimes Teal doesn't set out to paint a specific feeling at all but simply uses the process to reveal an emotional state he can't identify; it took him a week to paint one titled "Thinking Out Loud."

"I had lot of things that I needed to work out during this time," Teal says. What came from this internal place is a painting that exudes frustration and confusion, he reflected. The swirls of color and thick layers of indiscriminate strokes cause the same emotional response in the observer.

Always interested in the audience's per-

ception of his work, Teal enjoys hearing feedback before offering his own insights. He acknowledged that he likes to get people talking.

"This one creates a lot of discussion," he says, pointing to one of his bigger paintings. "Confrontation," a 4-by-9 piece, can be interpreted as many things. At first glance it looks like an eye peering out from the center of a whirlpool of colors. The circle gets bigger and bigger until it reaches the end of the canvas and falls away to infinity.

In creating it however, Teal says he tried to address what it feels like to acknowledge your own potential but be fearful of it at the same time.

"I wanted to create a feeling of unknown depth or layers," he says. The observer is left to decide whether it's frightening or exciting, he explained. "You can stand and face it or move out."

A simple strip of yellow, painted on one of the 4-foot ends provides the portal.

Although Teal created it with a vertical orientation, "Confrontation" hangs horizontally on the wall outside of the arcade in the EMU's Break; it's a change that Teal doesn't mind. He actually thinks it's interesting that his work can be interpreted differently with such a manipulation.

Not all of Teal's creations are completely abstract. "In Her Eyes" is an abstraction of something literal, the artist explains. It's a portrait piece that attempts to create a deeper description of the subject than reproduc-

ing her physical attributes would. The familiar shapes of a moon, a sun and a cloud manifest themselves in blue and red sweeps of paint.

Because Teal is also a musician, he feels a deep connection with that side of his creativity. One of his favorite painting processes is to turn on a favorite tune and let it guide his hand.

"Sometimes I just want to explore what Bach is," he says.

He rarely envisions the final product during those music-generated sessions. In the same vein, visions of colors are also infrequent — he usually lays his palate out in front of him and listens to which ones talk, he says.

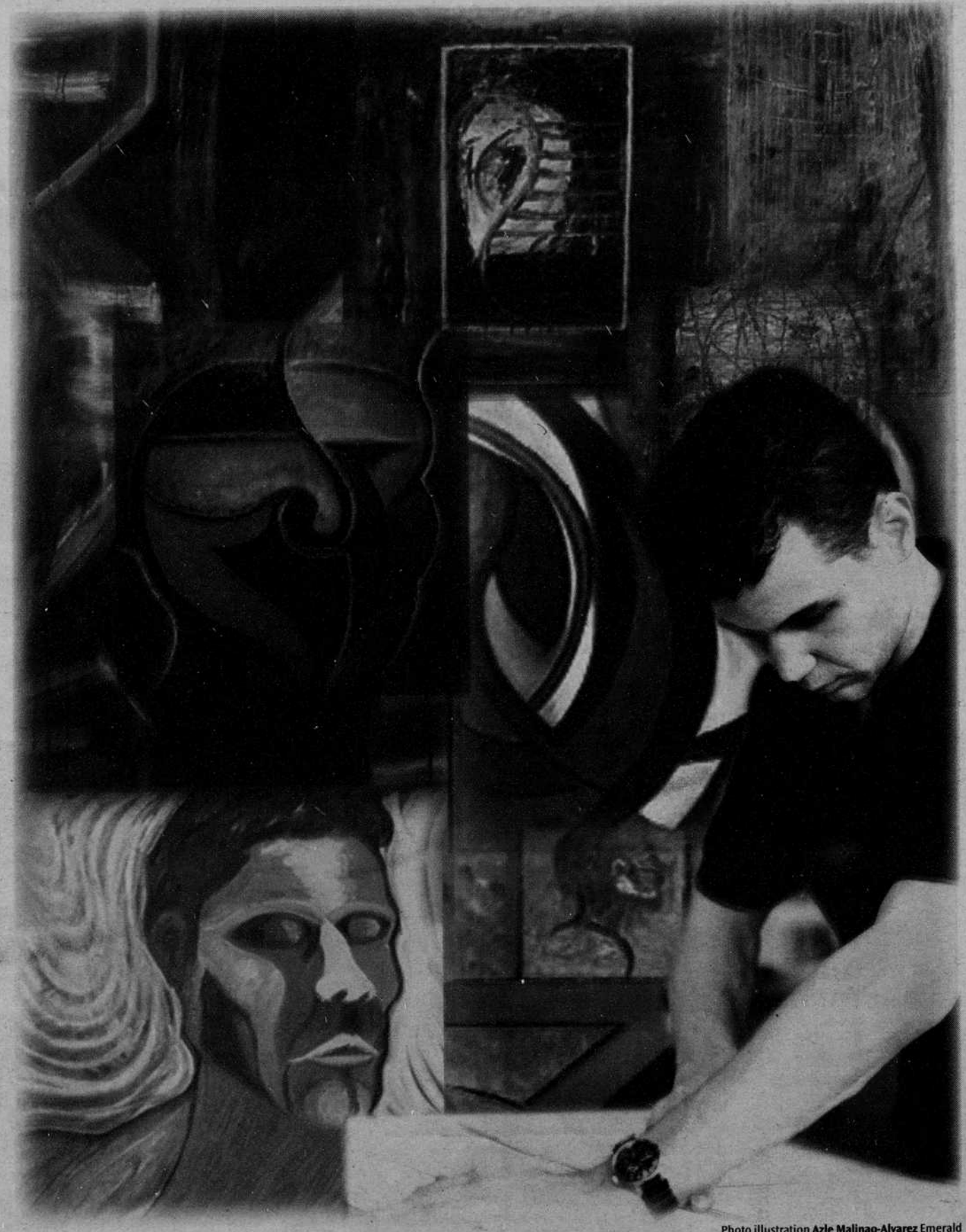
"I work with intent without attachment to results," he says.

The results, however, speak for themselves.

"Randy doesn't fit a mold," Snyder says. "He has a more art school way of thinking, and he wants to bring it to his design work. He's deeply committed to what he's doing."

Whether it's an emotional exploration, musical expression or more literal interpretation, each painting hanging in The Buzz is a unique complexity that awaits wandering eyes.

Teal's exhibit, "Discovery/Faith/Emotion," is currently on display at The Buzz until March 17. All paintings are for sale. The UO Cultural Forum, the exhibit's sponsor, has a price list in its EMU office, Suite 2.



Randall Teal, shown here working in his Lawrence Hall architecture studio, has 32 paintings hanging in The Buzz coffee shop.

Photo illustration Azle Malinao-Alvarez Emerald