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Artist moves beyond cute

■ The latest exhibition in the EMU details an artistic transition stemming from the artist's own life

By Mason West
Oregon Daily Emerald

There is a Newcomer in the Adell McMillan Gallery — Kelly Newcomer, that is.

The former Eugene resident's art is brightening up the EMU gallery this week with its vibrant colors and sensibilities.

Douglas Beauchamp, director of Lane Arts Council, has gotten to know Newcomer and her work through her involvement with the organization. He sees beyond the exterior replication of these images to the message that Newcomer wants to convey.

"It's a bit of a tongue-in-cheek commentary about how wrapped up we are in the Japanese culture and the cuteness of it," Beauchamp said.

The pop art nature of Newcomer's work is not the established norm for what gets displayed in the Adell McMillan Gallery, which is located on the second floor of the EMU, but new visual arts director Dan Karp believes it deserves recognition.

"When I received her portfolio, I thought 'it's so simple,' but there's something about it that I can't disregard," Karp said.

Newcomer has a very simple explanation for that "something."

"I think people like my work be-



Artist Kelly Newcomer places her painting "Pink Explosion with Space Invader" in the Adell McMillan Gallery in the EMU.

cause it is actually happy," she said. "I'm a happy person."

The art included in this show represents three distinct periods in Newcomer's Oregon life. The first could be called the "doughnut period," in which, of course, she painted doughnuts.

"When I came to a Eugene, I was a baker," Newcomer said. "Sometimes I would sketch the dough while I was working. My job kind of influenced my art."

Her second period could be labeled the "cute period." "One of the things that really defines cute is looking like a baby," Newcomer said. "The really cute stuff has big eyes."

Many images from Sanrio, the company responsible for Hello Kitty,

appear in this period. It is also the time period in which Newcomer was newly married. However, Newcomer's next period was influenced by a big change from that lifestyle, her divorce.

"When I got divorced, I stopped wanting to paint cute things," Newcomer said. "I was no longer a cute little domestic thing."

So, Newcomer started to paint satellites. These more recent paintings are labeled by Newcomer as "cute tech." Her favorite painting, "Swiss Cheese Satellite," is part of this series and can be seen in the exhibit.

"I think I always like my newest painting the best," Newcomer said. "It's close to my heart."

The show ends Nov. 18.

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