

Two Artists at DIVA

Mixed media, glass

The title: *Frozen in Time*, mixed media by **LiDoña Wagner** (through Friday, Dec. 3), may not quite do justice to her work's vibrant colors and dynamic shape interaction. With their intense ochre, sienna and terra-cotta colors often contrasting with blue accents, a number of the pieces conjure the southwestern desert. Collaged over a painted Bristol ground, torn fragments of painted tissue, watercolor and printmaking papers create a slight bas-relief and evoke the shape, texture and fissures of rock formations. Lines drawn with Conté or watercolor crayons provide a further layer.

"Indirectly, my work is built upon 30 years of working with the poor in inner cities and in Africa and Asia," Wagner said. "The layering is so important to me in my work because ours is not a flat world but a richly-textured world. I'm always drawn to the archaic in the countries I visit. Layers and layers of meaning is what I see wherever I go."

After graduating from college in 1962 in Texas, Wagner became active in the civil rights movement, then worked in grassroots empowerment projects in developing countries for nearly 30 years. In 1991, she moved to western Canada where she wrote and started taking art classes, studying watercolor, cedar-bark brush painting, life drawing and mandala art.

Encrustations of Time is one of the more abstract pieces in the desert series, but any-

one who has looked at rocks — from a tiny mottled agate to a large lichen-encrusted rock — will recognize the source of Wagner's

inspiration in this richly textured work. *Ballad of Shard and Bone* celebrates archaeology to the rhythm of loosely Miró-like black lines and marks.

In *Rock Memories*, however, a rocky landscape is clearly evoked, with cliffs crested by dark bluish pines, the complementary

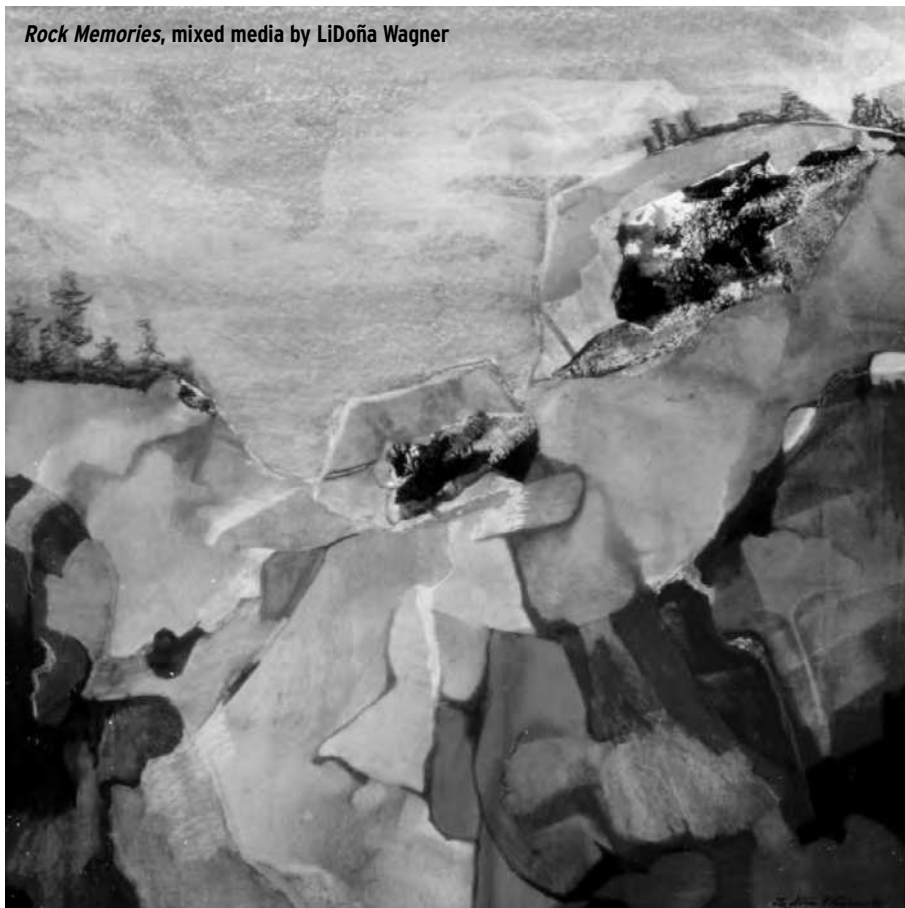
blue of the sky and bright ochre of the earth playing off each other. Though somewhat more abstract, *Ice Age Cliff Dwellings* is beautifully evocative of the architectural intricacies time and erosion have carved into a vertical rock formation.

Sometimes, the artist introduces a narrative element. In *Shaman Invoking Wisdom*, owls appear within a complex golden shape that lights up a cave. The shape may represent the shaman himself and not just his invocation. Meanwhile, in *Bear Medicine*, outlines of stylized bear shapes over the painted surface playfully subvert the impression of depth created by the landscape of boulders and stone arches. Paw prints as large as the bears defy any sense of scale. *Bear Greet the Sun* is perhaps less successful. Only the colors may be said to fit loosely with the title, while the overall composition denies the possibility of a figurative interpretation.

Pieces outside the desert series are less tightly linked. Many are purely abstract compositions. Particularly successful is *Wisdom Marks* with its counterpoint of flowing dark lines and colored shapes. *Inside Out* relies on a structure of window-like squares of different sizes, beyond the largest of which a turbulent sunset sky may be imagined. To carry its message, *Forest Dilemma* uses a number of newsprint fragments over a background reminiscent of a barren earth viewed from an airplane. In *I Hate Violence*, against a wall of splattered blood, a single news fragment begins with the very words in the title.

Other pieces seem loosely connected by the theme of passage and change: *Threshold*; *Transition is Good*; *Metamorphosis*; *Maiden*,

Rock Memories, mixed media by LiDoña Wagner



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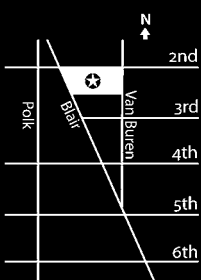
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