

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Three galleries feature Lanham artist's abstracts

By Wanda Jackson
Sentinel Arts Writer

What separates Lanham-resident Laurence Chandler from other artists?

He knows what it is like to follow a dream and the type of faith and perseverance required to stay on track. Chandler is in his home studio by 6 o'clock every morning — painting, sipping coffee and occasionally watching an episode of "The Sopranos" (he likes the theme music).

Unlike many other artists who don't know how to create feeling and emotion on canvas, he relays a sense of both the familiar and the unknown. Chandler creates works that entice viewers to linger for awhile. He creates abstract expressions of landscapes, poems, culture, politics, romance, self-discovery, humanity and music (jazz, in particular) to name a few themes.

Some artists don't have that perfect mix of technical skills and personality that make clients feel right at home, as though they have known them for years. Chandler greets clients with friendly southern hospitality, and it's immediately apparent that he knows art and is passionate about his work.

Chandler is a graduate of the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore and believes that "when you do your best, someone is bound to take notice."

Apparently, he is not alone in that belief. Three area galleries have taken those words to heart.

Touchstone Gallery at 901 New York Avenue, Northwest, D.C. is featuring select works by Chandler in an exhibit titled "MiniSolos" through Aug. 27.

Gallery West at 1213 King Street in Old Towne Alexandria is featuring select works by Chandler in "The Power of Color III" exhibit through Sept. 4. The artist's reception is from 5 to 8 p.m. Saturday.

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission Art Gallery in Laurel is featuring a "Solo" exhibit of his works from Sept. 1 to Sept. 30.

Chandler sees his paintings as a journey not just through subject matter but through the process as well. He doesn't start with any preconceived notions of how a piece may be. Instead, he starts working and sees what develops through the process.

"I see it more as a dialogue or a conversation," Chandler said. "I feel that each piece is like stepping out on stage and that something will come out of the conversation between the piece and the creative activity of making it. I don't use a formula. I try to dive in with a beginner's mind every time."

"As an artist, my objective is to make art that is both revealing and accessible but which also acts as a muse for the viewer, one that inspires and provides intellectual and visual stimulation."

"I am inspired by people, books, dreams or unexpected emotions," said the artist who uses different mediums, working predominantly in acrylics and mixed media. "I paint complex forms, shapes and lines in bold colors to express my emotions and thoughts, and my spark for life and beauty. For me, the color yellow signifies hope, the color gold shows richness of the soul and the color red conjures up a range of seemingly conflicting emotions from passionate love to war."

Chandler described his paintings as "dramas."

His shapes begin as "unknown adventures in an unknown space."

"And, the fact that a person could cry, laugh or be inspired when viewing my work shows that I can communicate those basic human emotions," he said. "In many ways, they are having the same experience I had when I painted them."

Chandler admires local artist Sam Gilliam, who has achieved international recognition for abstract paintings, beveled-edge wall hangings, draped canvas, metal and wood ensembles and public art.

"Just the mere fact that Gilliam has achieved the level of success that he has with this area as his base is remarkable," Chandler said. "When



PHOTO BY WANDA JACKSON

Above is "Paint Me Like I Am" by artist Laurence Chandler, who describes his works as "dramas." In this work, the predominate color red symbolizes self-discovery and living one's best life.

you see his work, you know the style is Gilliam. His work is universal. Frankly, that is my dream. When you

see my work, I want you to know it's my work."

For additional information

about Chandler's works, call 301-794-8480 and visit www.LaurenceChandlerFineArt.com.