

A MAILER'S FINE POINTS

Famous dad's influence displayed at Five Points

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REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

Danielle Mailer has always been a "more is more" artist. The figures in her paintings not only leap, bound, exult and alight, but they are painted in vibrant, primary colors, usually executed in Mailer's trademark dot patterns.

Mailer's new exhibit at Five Points Gallery in Torrington offers plenty for the Mailer enthusiast magnetized by her dizzyingly pointillist application of color.

Those familiar with her work will be cheered by Mailer's continued examination of other materials, primarily metal, onto which to apply her surrealist evocation of the exotic, fanciful and feminist.

But in the Five Points exhibition, Mailer has grown more confident and daring, both in her courageous decision to dial back on her bountiful predilections and in her assertion of her personal identity in a more intimate way.

For the first time, Mailer, who is among writer Norman Mailer's nine children, opens a window on his influence on her work. That the combusive, prodigiously talented and endlessly controversial writer should have an influence on his daughter's work is not surprising. Norman Mailer's larger-than-life persona loomed over literature and politics in a way strangely parallel to the way Mailer's explosive, confectionary and zealous application of ornament suffuse her forms.

Color is Mailer's language and she is verbose and bold in its application, spinning out candy dot-like mandalas of color that spool and thread through sinuous, serpentine forms.

But in her latest work, Mailer pointedly lets the forms speak for themselves. A series of three horizontal works, in particular, come as close to asceticism as a born colorist like Mailer is likely to get. In her acrylics "Night Bird," Mailer reduces her forms to three — a crow, a woman and a twisting vine, or tree.

"I was writing the quotes of my father's and after several months of focusing on my father and reliving my time with him, I started to feel kind of bold and taking a choice of incorporating my father's voice into my own work," said Mailer, 57, of Goshen. "But then I got kind panicky. The crows came charging in as a kind of antidote to invisibility."

Crows, of course, symbolize death, but for Mailer, they helped "reactivate my identity" that she felt in danger of being overwhelmed by her father's towering presence.

Here, the negative space of the composition — articulated in an almost neon orange — is more texturally rendered. The space becomes simpler and therefore more encompassing. The bird itself is hawk-like in its implacability. Throughout these motifs a woman's head protrudes from the ground, like a bush, or stretches in serpentine sensuality with an elegance

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Danielle Mailer's 'Night Bird 1' series is on display at Five points Gallery in Torrington.

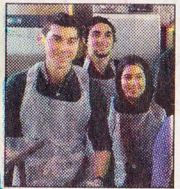


IF YOU GO

WHAT: Danielle Mailer's "Body Language"

WHERE: Five Points Gallery, 33 Main St., Torrington

accent



Community

Find out what your friends, neighbors have accomplished. **8D**

Faith

The weekend's religious services, events are listed. **6D**

MAILER: Artwork on display in Torrington

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seasoned with ebullience. This is a spare garden in which a woman's presence, though tentative, is penetrating.

A clue to Mailer's more reductive pieces is found in her Amazonian-sized "Muses" series, in which three of Mailer's female forms, all tattooed with the Pict-like motifs that have become a part of Mailer's iconography, leap jubilantly toward and away from one another.

All three of the muses have quotes from Norman Mailer, including this one, which is engraved on his gravestone in Provincetown: "There was that law of life so cruel and so just which demanded that

one must grow or else pay more for remaining the same."

For Danielle Mailer, it is a mantra that she has incorporated into her own artistic ambition. "I lived through these things just by proxy," she said of her father's tumultuous life. "Those were the core examples for me of how to navigate the world. There was an impermanence to my upbringing so it's something that is familiar to me."

Within the face of another of the muses is the Norman Mailer quote "Every moment of one's existence one is growing into more or retreating into less."

It is suggestive of both ends of the spectrum in Mail-

er's work — the urgent abundance of works like her cat sculpture — whose head pivots inquisitively toward a coiling, heavily ornamented tail on which a bird perches enticingly, as well as the newer, more minimalistic work.

One theme that has remained constant and has arguably taken on even more vigor, is Mailer's liberal use of animal motifs throughout her work.

Mailer's animal universe is jewel-toned and enviably peaceful. It bubbles with a mirthful serenity. Its frontiers are marked by ribbon-candy borders that encase polka-dotted expanses of fox, swans, elephants, birds, butterflies and horses. Bones —

symbols of the dead or treats for dogs — break up oceans of white dots and lime green ovals. Ordinary dachshunds turn magical with a saddle adorned with the image of a cheetah. Rejoicing and buoyancy are everywhere in Mailer's work; that's been obvious for years. But recently her work has taken on a new maturity and urgency. These animals-within-animals are more than ornaments.

They are a suggestion of an inherent animal nature in all of us.

Perhaps we all are dachshunds with a little cheetah inside. Danielle Mailer's work reminds us that it might be so.

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