

Northeast Valley Artist of the Month

John Morris

It was music to John Morris's ears when an art critic described his work as the abominable snowman's armpit.

"I think that's great," said Morris, a Fountain Hills artist.

Morris takes that comparison as a compliment, because it's not an inaccurate descrip-

tion of some of his work. At first glance of his art, that seems to be a dangerous statement for him to make.

His paintings – upon first inspection – appear haphazard. Colors are splattered and flung about. If that reflects his inner thoughts, you might not want to invite him to dinner.

But on closer inspection,

down hardedge columns of color in one direction.

He applies another layer – this time a wider pattern – then another and another.

When complete, a quick glance shows something similar to a drop cloth. But stare a little longer and the layers seem to detach. Looking at the painting then becomes a 3D journey into a canvas. It's actually quite fun.

Once the view gets to that level – the fun level – Morris's mission is accomplished.

"I want people to smile about my work and to get some humor out of it," he said.

Reverence can be saved for the Mona Lisa, or for Whistler's Mother.

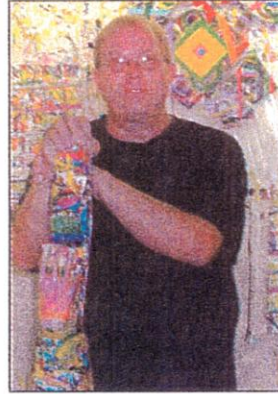
Morris wants and expects a hands-on experience with his art.

Though most art galleries cringe at the notion, Morris invites people to touch his paintings.

His favorite adjective about his own work is "goeey."

"I want people to touch it, to feel it so it comes alive for them," he said.

Morris is an abstract paint-



John Morris

er but describes himself as a colorist. He experiments with the way motion and light play with the colors of his acrylic paints.

An earlier work included painted plastic sheets crowned with a neon light. As people passed

the work, the plastic moved, bending and changing the colors.

He's also a bit of a mad scientist, taking bits and pieces of odd finds and bringing them to life through his work.

One piece is made from a

carpet tube, lace curtains and mannequin hands.

He's used bark and pinecones, discarded deer horns and cactus skeletons. It's all in the name of texture, he said.

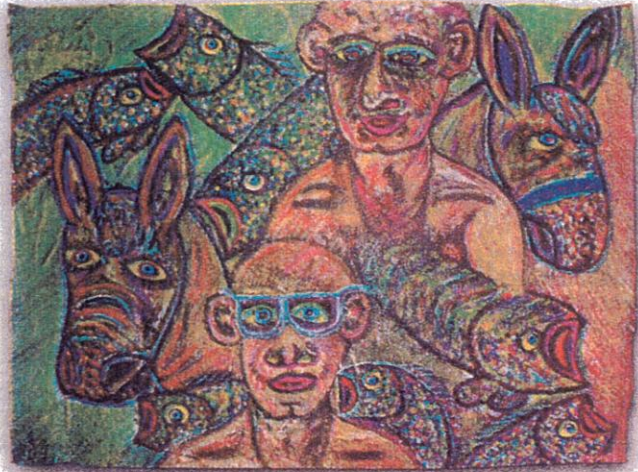
He counts as his influences Hans Hoffman and Van Gogh, among others. Some of his impressionistic pieces have a Picasso-inspired look, too. He enjoys and uses the colors of Africa and Mexico.

Morris earned a bachelor's degree in art education from the University of Wisconsin-Stout, and a master's degree in fine art from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

His paintings hang in countless private and corporate collections.

Currently, he is represented by Another Point of View art gallery in Fountain Hills,

and will appear Aug. 18 as the featured artist in the Plaza Fountain Inside's monthly Art Walk.



"Horses and Fishes" by John Morris

tion of some of his work.

His art is wild. It's full of emotion and spirit.

It's no bowl-of-fruit still life.

"I express my thoughts and feelings through color," Morris said.

the truth of his art is seen.

It seems messy and scattered, but there's a method to his madness.

It's all about layering. Somewhat like building a model car, Morris goes at his work methodically, first laying



John Morris describes himself as a colorist.