

Artist says perception is the key

By Matt Seemann

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No one really knows where inspiration comes from.

Albuquerque artist Rini Price doesn't worry about where it's from, she just listens when it speaks.

"My earlier works were more about how I perceived other people, and now my work is more about how other people perceive the world," says Price, 63.

Price has had her exhibition, "Our Species," which opened Oct. 29, extended through Dec. 9 at the American Institute of Architects building on the University of New Mexico campus. The show covers her work from 1977 to the present.

Price came to New Mexico from Memphis, Tenn., to study art at UNM. Since graduating with a bachelor's degree in painting in the early '60s, she has drawn for magazines, exhibitions and some of husband V.B. Price's books.

"New Mexico always made me feel freer than other places," Price says. "That makes a difference no matter what type of art you're involved with."

There was a period in Price's life in which her art consisted mostly of checker patterns, and she often draws trees for her personal collection. Her works at the AIA exhibit are mostly of people in the midst of different circumstances in their lives.

Many of her pictures show nameless people experiencing a variety of emotions, but some of her art features significant figures from literature and history. Among those are Adam and Eve, Hermes and Harlequin.

"Ophelia," one of the drawings in the AIA exhibit, captures the emotional distress of the distraught Shakespearean character

'OUR SPECIES'

Exhibit of Rini Price's latest work. Run date extended through Dec. 9. American Institute of Architects, University of New Mexico campus. Hours and location: 260-0571.

before she plunges to her death in a river.

"The famous figures I draw, mostly women, are usually just objectified through art. I try to explore them and how they might have viewed things," she says.

The people in her drawings, she says, are not images she has thought about for a long time so much as things that just suddenly show up in her mind. Inspiration, after all, can strike anywhere.

"Her work just blossoms forth, and sometimes even she is surprised by the result," says Lynne Reeve, an Albuquerque resident and friend of Price.

Price prefers to work in isolation and likes to explore the way other people perceive the world. She considers anyone's perception of her art valid and doesn't want others to see it just as she does, she says.

"I don't expect anyone to understand my perception of my art," she says. "Art is all about the perception of other people."

She briefly put her own work on hold in 1980 to help her brother, sister and husband with a twice-monthly publication called *Century: A Journal of Observation and Opinion*. When they stopped publishing *Century* in autumn of 1983, Price began painting again in a studio owned by her friend and well-known local architect George Pearl. That's



Rini Price's graphite drawing "Ophelia" is featured in the Albuquerque artist's exhibit at the American Institute of Architects.



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where she found another art form she enjoys.

"George Pearl owned a baby grand piano, and I always wanted to learn how to play Bach on it," Price says.

After buying some books and taking lessons for a few years, Price finally knew how to play Bach, as well as the music of several other composers.

"Whenever I have a dry spell in my art, I play piano, and it helps to get me past my painter's block," she says. Everything she does — piano playing, painting and roaming around Albuquerque — influences her art, but her art is more than that, she says.

"My work is not who I am," she says, "but what I do with who I am."