

Midnight, by David Chorlton, walks a tightrope between mysterious and romantic.

2 artists' bold strokes

Revamped downtown gallery takes a big step forward

By John Carlos Villani
john.villani@arizonarepublic.com

A recent interior remodeling has done wonders for the Paulina Miller Gallery, a downtown art space. The former setup, which was cluttered to the point of claustrophobic, has given way to a much smarter scheme, with upgraded lighting and higher walls.

The gallery's improved dynamics are put to good use in its current exhibition of paintings by Kurt von Behrmann and David Chorlton, two experienced artists whose works are crafted with confidence and clarity.

Chorlton's moody, elegant watercolors walk the tightrope between mysterious and romantic. His street scenes of nondescript urban areas at twilight are populated with faceless individuals whose similar

IF YOU GO

'Lyrical Interpretations: Works by David Chorlton and Kurt von Behrmann'

WHERE: Paulina Miller Gallery, 817 N. First St., Phoenix.

WHEN: Through Feb. 4. Gallery hours are 1-5 p.m.

Tuesdays-Saturdays.

ADMISSION: Free.

SUITABILITY: Families.

DETAILS: (602) 307-9643.

forms and attire speak to the dehumanizing effects of urban life.

On his most successful pieces, such as the powerful triptych *The Still Hour* and the singular *Midnight*, Chorlton uses shades of royal blue and contrasting hues of radiant yellow to masterful effect, imbuing these works on paper with depth, texture and sensuality.

Also included in his exhibition are several of Chorlton's landscape paintings, none of which measures up to the much higher standards of his urban imagery.

Von Behrmann, a former art instructor at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock who moved to the Valley in 1997, has mounted a significantly larger and more diverse exhibition in the gallery's remaining space. His show, with more than 30 pieces, is divided among acrylic works on canvas, mixed-media pieces, colored-pencil drawings on paper and two pencil

drawings.

His decisive drawing is one of his strengths. Whether it's *Suspended Kimono*, a delicate pencil work with a sense of quietude, or *Colored Kimono*, a colored drawing whose textured representations of a cloth object are floated against a multihued background, von Behrmann proves how comfortable he is with a medium that many artists never get the hang of.

Also among the show's standout works are von Behrmann's acrylic on canvas paintings of men's robes and kimonos. *It Hangs There* suspends a brilliantly hued robe against a deep green landscape and pale blue sky. To emphasize the robe's dimensions, von Behrmann has folded a section of canvas on top of the painting's main body, creating a flap that mimics how the lapels of a robe lay softly against a torso.

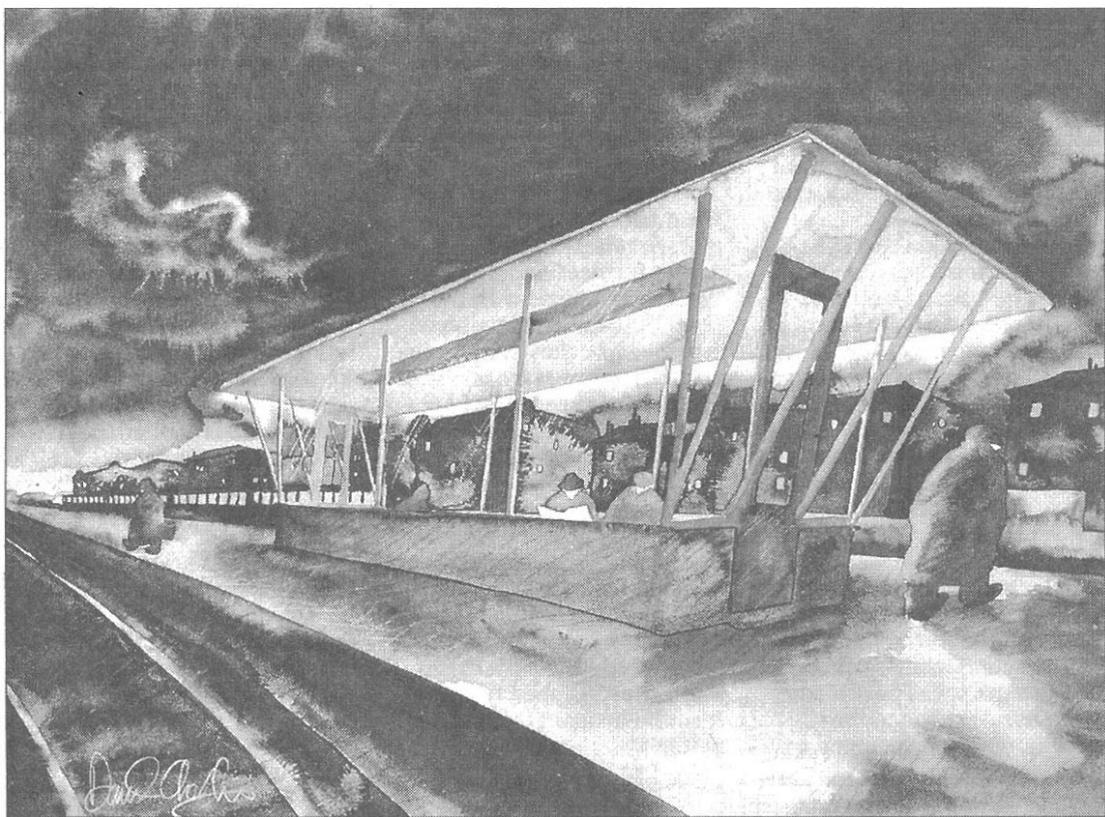
Less successful are two figurative works, *Gold Man* and *Constant*, both colored pencil on paper. They incorporate images of a pink flamingo atop clouded representations of the human form, and the chief effect of the juxtaposition is visual confusion.

A pair of small, round acrylic paintings, on canvas adhered to board, point in a direction the artist may want to pursue further. *Circular Kimono Sunset* and *Dark Circular Kimono* are richly textured and boldly colored works whose mixed-media surfaces are sensual and appealing, an effect largely achieved through a carefully layered application of underpainting.



Red *Robe*, by Kurt von Behrmann, features rich textures and colors.

Reach the reporter at
(602) 444-8384.



Photos courtesy of Paulina Miller Gallery

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