



Photos by Cultural Exchange Gallery

*E-Ticket Ride*, at left, and *Jungle Red* are two works by Anne Coe. Her pieces aren't necessarily more realistically painted than other works are, but they have an intrinsic liveliness that draws the eye and speaks to the heart.

### If you go

#### PAINTINGS BY ANNE COE

**WHERE:** The Cultural Exchange Gallery, 4235 N. Marshall Way, Scottsdale.

**WHEN:** 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays, 7 to 9 p.m. Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturdays.

**DETAILS:** (480) 941-0900.

# When art is life

Best works don't just speak to the mind, they come alive in the heart and soul

**A**rt galleries generally have monthlong shows, but there's more going on at a gallery than the star exhibition. You can wander in the back and see work by the other artists the gallery represents.

In fact, unless there is a sign telling you otherwise, you can usually wander anywhere in the building. Even employees' offices have paintings hanging on their walls that are there to be seen. So don't be shy.

And there are things to discover about art that you can learn by seeing the stuff in the back.

I recently visited the Cultural Exchange in Scottsdale to see the primary show, new work by Bill Schenck — doing an updated version of his



art notes

Richard Nilsen

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Southwest paint-by-number routine — and was sidetracked by something else.

The gallery represents many fine artists, some better than others, and with a range of styles and subjects. But five canvases hidden in the back fairly jumped off the walls at me, reminding me that the primary effect of good art is not intellectual but emotional and sensory.

They were five Anne Coe paintings,

and they seemed more alive than their neighbors.

There is no other way to describe the difference. Some art is dead and some is alive: Coe's paintings throb and breathe; they engage their viewers and make a living connection with them, as if they were talking to you and you felt obligated to respond.

I've been familiar with Coe's work for years — decades, really — and I've always liked it, but in this setting, among a good deal of work more pedestrian, I realized *why* I like it so much.

It isn't the subject matter, which sometimes verges dangerously close to cuteness, with her dogs or coyotes driving convertibles.

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See Sunday's A&E section for coverage of the arts, film, television a

Larry James, noon Feb. 9, James signs

discuss and sign *Secrets of the Baby*

nix. Free admission. (602) 265-6805.

## Anne Coe's art is about life, not how clever or 'deep' artist is

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And it isn't her environmental message, which sometimes gets in the way of her art (if you have a message, send a telegram). But the work itself is just alive.

You can see this phenomenon watching someone draw. Some artists have what is called a "live line" and some don't: Their pencils draw a perfectly acceptable, but static line. You can't mimic

the liveliness; it has to be there.

Coe's work has it. Her coyotes or cows are not necessarily more realistically painted than others, but the paint is alive.

I believe that the cause of this life in painting is not the talent of the artist, but his or her level of awareness — awakens in the world. Is the artist excited about the things surrounding her? Plugged in? Not bored, but

connected?

This shows in the line, in the way the paint is brushed, in the eyes of the things she paints.

If, after all, the purpose of art is to remind us that we are alive — and not merely to remind us the artist is bright, clever or "deep" — then nothing does that so well as art that breathes, speaks and flashes its eyes at us.

Coe's paintings do that.

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