

Take a 'Totally Tubular' stroll through artist Leveille's subconscious

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Viewing the latest exhibit by artist Bert Leveille is a far cry from simply walking between paintings hung on a wall.

The experience is more like taking a stroll through Leveille's subconscious — represented by large wall hangings and three-dimensional pieces that are reached by crawling through a translucent, winding tube.

"My work is about getting in touch with the self," Leveille said. Her paintings "allow the viewer to experience another world, jarring one's perspective of the real world."

Titled "Totally Tubular," the exhibit is on display through Nov. 29 at the Prairie Center for the Arts, 201 Schaumburg Road in Schaumburg.

Leveille, 43, is an Elgin artist who serves on the board of the Contemporary Artcenter of Arlington, and on the Elgin Cultural Arts Commission.

She calls the showcasing of her work an "art installation" rather than an "art exhibit" because she said it represents a total experience of her art. The installation requires participation from the the viewer, more than a traditional exhibit, which requires only moving from piece to piece.

"I work from the subconscious,"

Leveille said. "I put myself in an open frame of mind, and things start happening."

Her husband, Roger Dahlstrom, has seen it happen.

"Sometimes, Bert wakes up in the middle of the night," Dahlstrom said. "She goes into her studio and I don't see her for a day or two. I just bring her coffee, and she's fine."

For Leveille, "Totally Tubular" represents the progression of her work throughout her career.

"I create a fantasy world with my art," she said. "It has evolved over 20 years."

"I used to be totally abstract. These images appeared and I just let them stay. I have sculptures of these characters that are out of my subconscious," she said. "I feel we share emotions and intellect with the rest of the universe, even though they don't look like us. We have a camaraderie with them."

Leveille, in a news release about the exhibit, describes the works as particularly interesting against today's atmosphere of "politically correct cultural diversity." She is searching for a "common thread of experiences, emotions and intellectuality that binds the human spirit to universal truths and realities."

Revealing the similarities between

the viewer and the alien characters allows viewers to re-enter their "real world" with fresh eyes, according to the release.

Totally Tubular, which has been on display since Nov. 5, was kicked off Nov. 7 with a dance performance and a reception for the artist afterward.

The dancers represented some of the figures created in Leveille's mind, which come to life in her paintings and art pieces. And the tubes for which the exhibit is named were incorporated into the two dances performed by those figures.

As the dancers vibrated and moved across the floor, they exuded the camaraderie Leveille described. Dressed in white, stretchy leotards, the dancers represented some of the more abstract figures in Leveille's work.

The dances were choreographed by Shawn Coyle, whom Leveille praises as an up and coming gifted choreographer.

"She has a wonderful interdisciplinary sensitivity," Leveille said.

In addition to the display at the Prairie Center, Leveille's works can be seen by appointment at the Space 900 gallery in Chicago by appointment. The gallery is located at 900 N. Franklin.



Artist Bert Leveille said her new exhibit at the Prairie Center for the Arts features images from her subconscious. The exhibit, titled "Totally Tubular" runs through Nov. 29.

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