

Patterns and color

College exhibit offers order in chaotic world

By John Crowe

R-S features reporter

Abstract? Certainly. Colorful? Definitely. Chaotic? No. Easy, one-size-fits-all descriptions do not readily come to mind for the current art exhibit at the Shasta College Gallery in Redding.

Grandly titled "Heart of Light, The Heart of Silence," a phrase from Dante's "Divine Comedy," the exhibit features a series of paintings and constructions by Bay area artists, many of them featuring ordered geometric shapes. All of them explore the possibilities of color and the materials used.

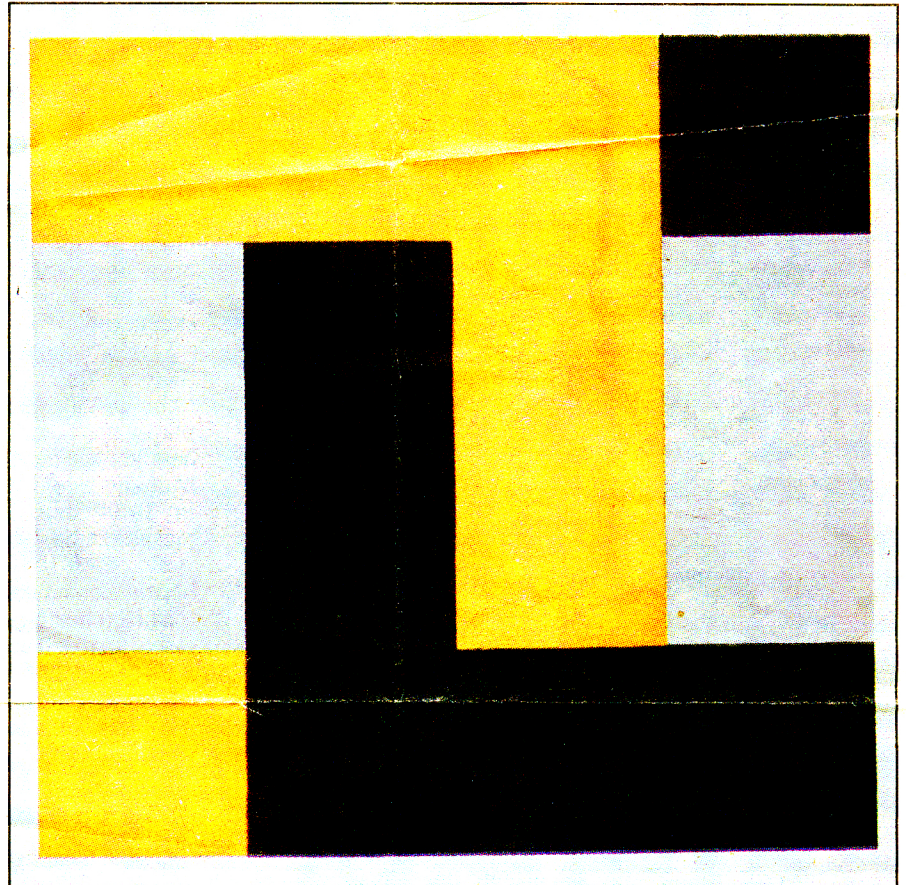
Co curator Richard Wilson went to some lengths to emphasize that despite their seeming economy of style, they are not "minimalist." Wilson prefers terms like "reductive," "distilled" or "simple" (not simplistic).

While a minimalist may take a seemingly ordered world and pick it apart into spare parts that may carry with them ominous overtones, these artists are looking for some sense of order and harmony, Wilson said.

A painting that at first blush looks like nothing more than a peach wash is, on closer examination, a rectangle divided horizontally with subtle gradations of color.

Another allows the wood grain to show through a series of concentric squares. Another looks like a simple black and yellow grid. But it takes on added significance when the viewer realizes that background was painted first and the overlying yellow added free-hand, without the use of a straight edge.

"These works offer a simple, direct sensual experience. They offer a place



Patsy Krebs' untitled watercolor features interlinked squares.

of peace," Wilson said.

Many of the works explore the medium of paint itself.

In some cases, the pictures are unframed and the paint "bleeds" over the edge. That offers a counterpoint to the ordered appearance on the surface and allows the viewer to get an idea of how the work was done.

One piece is done all in an intensely red paint so flat that there is virtually no reflection. Another large painting was done with special refractive paint that has the shimmering, changing quality of a hologram.

John Harper, Wilson's colleague and

co-curator of the exhibit, suggested that the works invite viewer participation in a broader sense than more traditional representational art.

That kind of painting tells the viewer what it is, but these works "are trying to get rid of all that," he said.

While a representational work offers a clear view of something and defines the space in which that object exists, these works are open to interpretation in terms of content and spatially.

"Heart of Light, The Heart of Silence" will remain on display through March 25. Gallery hours are 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday.