

Art often grows out of crisis, but the seeds can sometimes take a long while to germinate. Leo Neufeld's last commercial solo exhibit was in 2000. That year also marked the beginning of a deeply traumatic period for him.

Suffice it to say that it took a while from Neufeld to reassemble his life. At first, his art did not come easily. Yet when it did finally come, it came in a flood of spectacular creation. You see the results in this exhibit, a show that serves as a testament to the fact that Neufeld's artistic vision not only survived, but was rejuvenated following what he describes as the darkest period of his life.

For Neufeld, the spiritual center of that vision is now and will always be his portraits. Aspects of his work have changed over the years, but the core has remained the same. From the beginning of his career, Neufeld's paintings of individuals have been notable for never flattering or idealizing their subjects, yet somehow always treating them with kindness, gentleness even. This artist doesn't need to tell me –although he has- that what he loves most in the experience of painting people is developing a personal bond with them. Certainly, every one of the portraits in this show reveals Neufeld's cultivated instinct for intimacy. For me, there's something deeply comforting in this.

Although Neufeld has been painting landscapes for decades, this aspect of his work still feels like a new frontier. Even so, to my eyes at least, the landscapes included in this show meld seamlessly with the portraits. This might be because Neufeld bathes scenes of natural New Mexico in an empathy quite similar to the warmth with which he treats his human subjects. Even in these depictions of our region's mesas, flora and endless skies, there is a bond. There is care. There is also compassion.

Look carefully at these pieces. Absorb them into yourself. This show is a carefully orchestrated catharsis, not just for Leo Neufeld, but for all of us.

- Steven Robert Allen
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