Review of “Creative Thread” by Carl Mellor

“Creative Thread,” the current exhibit at the Edgewood Gallery, comes with a title that’s both literal and symbolic. On one hand, textile works are part of the show’s portfolio. On the other, the notion of a creative thread celebrates all four artists taking part in the exhibition: Lauren Bristol and Jacqueline Adamo, Tom Huff and Dana Stenson. They are all veteran artists who have lived in the Syracuse area for decades.

Not long ago, Bristol was making expressive baskets. At Edgewood, her fiber pieces are all hung on walls. They include cotton works crocheted and mixed-media works, with the mixed-media pieces a varied lot. “Kunda Matre,” for example, plays with fabric, shells and metal buttons. “Encoded,” meanwhile combines bright colors, striped patterns and tiny objects.

And Bristol stays on the move with work like “Finding The Path for Divine Purposes.” There she works within black borders, alternating orange, red and gray stripes, mixing in a bit of horse hair and a circle containing a tiny light. “You and Me and The Pillar of Light” is also imaginative, with bright colors, two obscure figures and a line segment running through the piece’s middle.

Over the years, Adamo has created many oil paintings. In the current exhibit, she’s showing new work that incorporates not only oil paint but also mixed-media fiber into canvasses. The shift results in a bevy of interesting pieces such as “Nice and Cozy” which features scorching red and orange colors.

The show also displays other works blending colors and texture: “Woven Sky,” with its rough surface and distinct patterns; “Door #2,” again working with an abstract flavor, “Thread Bare,” another of the new artworks. Look for “Web” in which a largely solid section contrasts with a motif suggesting a spider’s web or ink blot or other pattern.

Tom Huff, a third artist, doesn’t typically create fiber art; he’s a very accomplished stone sculptor. Beyond that, he’s played other creative roles: writer, curator, co-founder, along with Charlie Crafts, of a gallery space that existed for several years. And he’s done cultural commentary, collecting and evaluating dozens of consumer items which stereotype indigenous people.

At Edgewood, he has several sculptures on display. “Lacrosse” places a ball within a cradle; it’s both an innovative piece and a way of paying homage to the origins of the sport. The game played by dozens of college and high-school teams was born in Haudenosaunee communities.

A second piece, “Twins,” shows two figures in conflict. In the Haudenosaunee creation story, the twins are sons or grandsons of Sky Women. One makes beautiful rivers and gorgeous plants; the other makes trees with thorns, poisonous snakes, and other creatures. Calling one all-good and the other all-evil offers a limited view. Neither of them is perfect, and neither are human beings.

The show also presents Huff’s soapstone sculpture, “Family,” which depicts more than a dozen small figures,” and “Seven Generations.” The latter piece, a fine sculpture, combines a bird’s head, tiny human figures, turtle and other elements.

Finally, the exhibit displays rings, necklaces, earrings and other jewelry created by Dana Stenson who works with silver and many stones. She’s shown her jewelry both at Edgewood and a variety of other venues.

“Creative Thread” is on display through November 15, 2019 at the Edgewood Gallery, 216 Tecumseh Rd.

Carl Mellor wrote about visual arts for the Syracuse New Times from 1994 through June, 2019 when the paper closed. He continues to write about exhibitions and artists in the Syracuse area.