

David Mishra finds beauty in the uncommon

The artist developed an eye for the unusual during his childhood

By **TESS YOCOM**

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David Mishra's art varies so greatly in subject matter and style that it's hard to categorize them into any specific category.

For instance, one of his pieces, *Tomorrow's Relative*, is an acrylic landscape of trees in a field under a towering blue sky. Another recreates the scene in which a toothed seed protrudes from a peanut's "stomach" from the movie *Alien*.

On the evening of June 7, Mishra unveiled two never before seen paintings during his exhibit opening at the Catacombs Gallery of Artlandish Gallery. One of the paintings is titled *Tree of Life*, which features a man, woman and child sitting peacefully underneath a tree that rests against an overwhelming red background and golden sun. "It's just my take of the tree of life," Mishra says. "It's a common human theme people use."

Later that evening, Mishra flipped the same painting upside-down, and instantly, what once were the roots of the living tree were transformed into a dead, bare one planted in a cemetery.



"Tree of Life" is one of two works exclusively revealed during David Mishra's exhibit opening on June 7 at Artlandish Gallery. Depending on the painting's orientation, the viewer's perspective changes between life and death. Photograph by MEGAN DONOHUE

What caught her eye is Mishra's attention to detail. "The intensity of the imagery is really cool," she says. "The intensity of the paint quality is interesting. Just the way the paint is applied — layers and layers and layers — to achieve the effects his gets is really nice."

Mishra says he usually does not discuss his work and hopes instead that it will speak for itself.

His exhibit is open until July 1.

The other is titled Embers, a scene of butterflies swirling in a vortex, which was inspired by his daughter Iris while they were burning brush.

His passion for the unusual stems from his childhood. Mishra grew up in Arbela, a small northeastern Missouri town, where he was raised by his uncle and grandfather. He remembers them operating a "portable sawmill" that Mishra describes as "basically all the components of a sawmill welded to the frame of an old diesel truck."

He explains that the uncommon sight fascinated him, and now he tries to incorporate such oddity and unfamiliarity into his artwork. "I hate the idea of settling into a niche — to call myself a surrealist, a cartoonist, a painter, an illustrator," he says. He creates "deep, thought-provoking artworks" but also what he refers to as "goof-doodles." "I do both and a lot of stuff in between," he says.

The diversity and versatility in Mishra's work is what draws Huw Evans to Mishra's art, which he discovered on DeviantArt, an online community that showcases its users' art.

"The really cool thing about David's stuff is his variety," says Evans, creative director of EYECATCHER Video. "A lot of artists are really, really good, but they just do landscapes or just draw animals. What I like about him is that I never have a clue. It's totally different."

In one of his most creative works, David carved skeletons out of potatoes and assembled them together with wire. "It was a pumpkin-carving contest, but you didn't have to use a pumpkin," Mishra says.

When she saw Mishra's art, Artlandish Gallery owner Lisa Bartlett says she was blown away. "I'm always willing to let new artists come in and have a chance at exhibiting," she says. "When he brought his work in, I was really floored by it and offered to have a special show for it to exhibit his work."