

Digital artist bursts ahead

By **NICK GEORGIU**
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Laredoans caught a glimpse Friday of a new way to paint, where there are no brushes involved.

Instead, these digital artists are clicking buttons and creating images that have the look and feel of a real painting, said Poncho Santos, the education director of the Laredo Center for the Arts, 500 San Agustin Ave.

“At the end of the day, you’re just making pictures,” he said. “If you’re a true artist, you experiment with all mediums.” On Friday, the center continued its monthly exhibitions from out-of-town artists with digital paintings created by Austin-based artist Chalda Maloff.

Maloff said she works with an electronic stylist and computer software that can simulate all different kinds of paintings, whether watercolor, coal, chalk or oil.

“It can simulate all of them and use them all in the same painting,” she said.

Artists couldn’t do that beforehand.

But with the computer software, they can now add all painting elements into one image and get a new “exciting visual element,” Maloff said.

“You can work on a piece and do it until you get all the details that otherwise would have been difficult,” she said. “You can now play with effects.” Also, digital-painting artists can correct mistakes. For example, if a color is too light or dark, they are able to shift the entire color palette.

To produce her work, Maloff said she bought a giant \$5,000 printer, which is about the size of a refrigerator.

“Having my own printer really gives me that ultimate control,” she said.

However, despite the privilege of having her own printer, she only prints an art piece once.

“Then it’s an original,” she said.

Maloff might create another similar piece, but not the same one.

On one of the display walls, there are five fragments of one of her paintings.

“I do it this way because when you look at the smaller parts, you see it in a different way,” she said.

Kids enjoy the smaller pieces on an elemental level, while adults take pleasure in the details, she said, adding that she’s been experimenting with digital painting since 2002.

“It’s very interesting,” she said.

Though she recently started digital painting exclusively, she said that when she was a graduate student, in the 1970s, she saw a prototype for digital painting in San Francisco before it was made available to the public.

“I was blown away,” she said.

Her paintings are mostly abstract and aim to represent the reinvention of oneself.

“With the shapes and the shadows expressed in my paintings, there’s lot of physics while still being abstract,” she said.

For the first Friday each month, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. the Laredo Center for the Arts hosts an out-of-town artist.

There are also usually musicians.

“It’s important to the community as a whole,” Santos said. “We don’t just have amateurs, but we have professionals come in from out-of-town.” He added: “It’s about educating the public on contemporary art and experience things they would only see in San Antonio or any other city. It’s in their own backyard.” (Nick Georgiou may be reached at 728-2582 or nickg@lmtonline.com)

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