

Multi-media show at Woodbridge

by Duane Noriyuki

As she touches the sacred ground, artist Beth Ames Swartz still feels the warmth of flames that have turned to ash to become the earth.

Fire once played a critical role in Swartz' work, as she burned and mutilated paper as part of the creative process. The work attracted international attention, as evidenced by her place in the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

But the fire process that created beauty had an uglier side, and in 1980 Swartz discovered that exposure to the fumes had "poisoned her body." She watched as the flames burned to ash, and she followed the warmth to the earth.

A Moving Point of Balance, showing throughout the summer at the Woodbridge Conference Center in Snowmass Village, reflects her work since 1982.

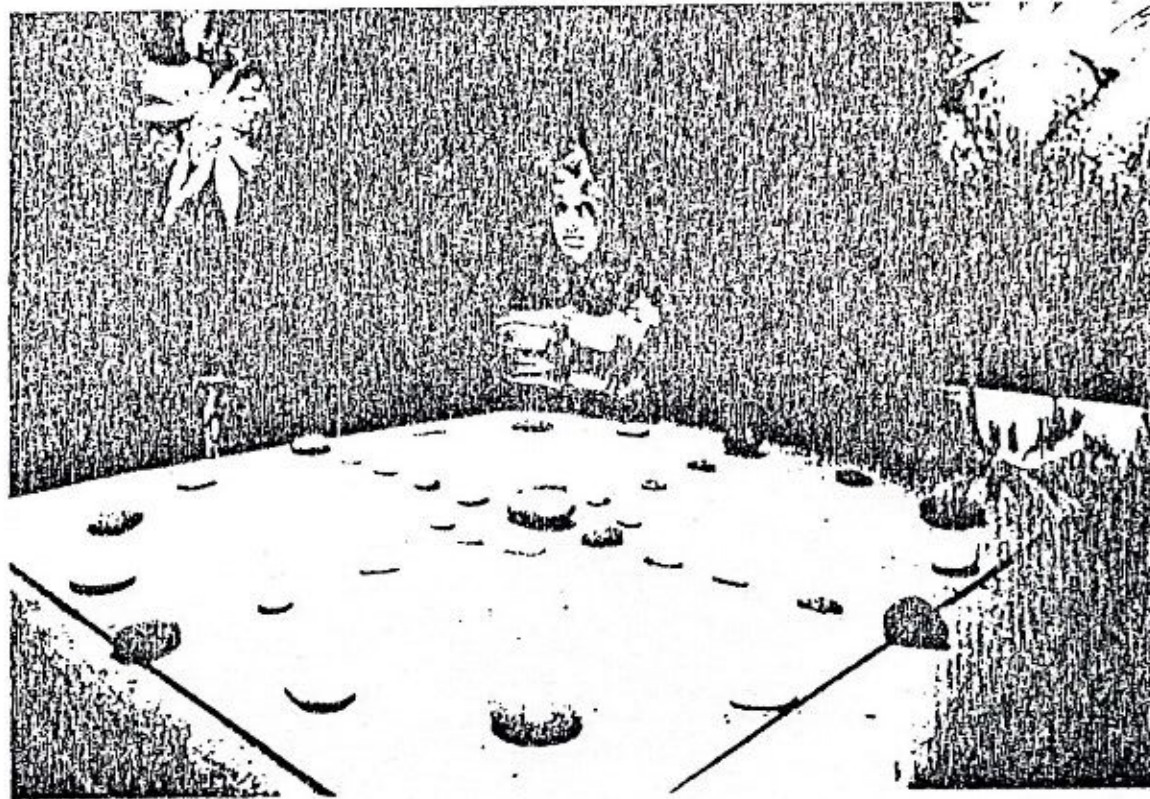
The series of seven paintings incorporates precise lighting and music and the Eastern belief in chakras, a means of healing for the body and soul based on seven energy centers.

Swartz describes herself as a seeker, a transformative artist whose work reflects the study of almost every major body of spiritual theory.

A Moving Point of Balance reflects spiritual energies drawn from rituals she performed at seven sacred Indian sites throughout the American west and Europe.

The series marks a significant transition in her work as she moved from paper to 7-foot by 7-foot canvas and from abstract to figurative.

The show is described as a "multi-media art experience to liberate the mind and stimulate the senses." It most recently



Artist Beth Ames Swartz of Santa Fe kneels before a Navajo medicine wheel, part of "A Moving Point of Balance," showing at the Woodbridge Conference Center in Snowmass Village. Two of the paintings included in the series of seven appear behind her. Frank Marlin photo.

appeared in San Diego. Enhancing Swartz' work is the lyrical abstract music of Frank Smith, lights that illuminate the drawings and bathe the viewer in colors that correspond to the chakras.

Swartz' paintings surround a Navajo medicine wheel created by Native American healer David Paladin. The viewer is a participant in an atmosphere blending music, lights, paintings with spiritual connections between the viewer and the experience.

Swartz, 50, has traveled a journey marked by seclusion and con-

fusion. Her art over the years marks transformations she has encountered in her search for connections with the past, her role as artist, woman, wife and mother and a part of the universe.

Transformative art is not easily defined even by Swartz. It is, she said, based on a common thread that runs through the major philosophies: Life is sacred.

In connecting the past to the future, the transformative art movement is an attempt to create a new language built on positive messages to describe a vision of what can be.

"A reality, for instance, is that we are on the brink of nuclear disaster. We can kill ourselves 15 times over," said Swartz. "But the vision is disarmament and peace, tranquility and harmony. The interesting thing is the creative process is the path of least resistance. It's like water in that you flow through rather than willing it."

That transformation will be the subject of a psychosynthesis workshop on Saturday, June 28, at the Woodbridge. Swartz will work with Penelope Young, founder of the San Diego Center for Psychosynthesis.

Young has integrated psychosynthesis, Gestalt, Reichian and family systems therapy to develop a healing guiding method.

"It's a form of awareness training that helps you shift your consciousness in a way that you feel your own soul, centeredness, your own connection to something bigger than the body," said Swartz.

As Swartz' work integrates her spirituality with her art, the question has evolved as to what the role of the artist in the transformation.

"We've started a group, ACT (Arts for Cultural Transformation), an international fellowship of artists — musicians, writers, sculptors, painters — because there are many of us all over the world who share a vision that the arts can play a crucial role in the transformation of the planet toward peace and harmony."

Swartz realizes she runs the risk of ridicule, of being viewed as an outcast. For artists with vision, that is nothing new, and she is willing to follow a path she sees before her.

And with her art, she shares the experiences of her journey. As Martin Luther King Jr had a dream and as Bob Dylan has a message, Swartz has a vision.

The creative process is her song, her message to those who will witness with open mind and a shared commitment to peace and harmony.

A Moving Point of Balance shows Tuesday through Sunday 9 am to 5 pm; and also 6 pm to 10 pm Friday through Sunday.

General admission is \$5, \$2.50 for teens and seniors. Children under 12 are admitted for no charge. For information about the show or workshop, telephone 923-4331.