

HEALING HUES

UTAH ARTIST PAMELA NIELSEN CAPTURES THE CURATIVE POWERS OF COLOR



Artist Pamela Nielsen stands in front of "truth," a large triptych composed of three panels—one of eight paintings displayed at the Yarrow Hotel during the 2007 Sundance Film Festival.

Nestled in the crook of a sofa in her basement studio, artist Pamela Nielsen wears a crimson blouse and tight jeans fastened with a belt buckle studded with rhinestones. Her stylish dark hair adds dramatic contrast to her pale skin, ruby lips, and cerulean eyes.

Everything about her seems to radiate in Technicolor.

Nearby, a large, red colorscape in an orange frame decorates a mantel painted lime green and complements the blue walls in the studio. Smaller panels of Nielsen's paintings

function as door fronts for bamboo cabinets. Even though every inch of the basement is splashed with rich, vibrant hues and bold patterns, it is a soothing and serene space. The balanced dance of colors finds alignment and expression in the room. Energetic, present, and full of childlike wonder, Nielsen tugs at her sleeve nervously.

After all, it's not easy to talk about what she describes as her "dark night of the soul." A few years ago, memories of childhood abuse marred her life with pain, loneliness, and despair. Until these memories surfaced, she had everything

going for her: a supportive husband, Scott Nielsen, who played baseball for the New York Yankees and Chicago White Sox; their four strapping young sons, who were all following in their father's athletic footsteps; and a successful acting and singing career.

With so much to lose, she made a diligent effort to heal these painful wounds and regain the balance in her life. She sought alternative healing methods and researched chakras. The word chakra, Sanskrit for wheel, refers to each of seven basic energy centers in the body. Each of these centers correlates to levels of con-



Pam created cabinet fronts using favorite sections of her painting "Imagination." "Genesis" hangs on the wall.

COLOR THERAPY

In Hinduism and various related Asian cultures, the word *chakra* refers to wheels of energy that begin at the base of the spine and finish at the top of the head. Believers contend that a constant balance between the chakras promotes health and a sense of well-being and that each is stimulated by its own and complementary color. The use of color—in dress, home décor, or diet—evokes healing and balance.

■ First Chakra: Red

Muladhara (foundation) or the base or root chakra is related to security, survival, and basic human potential. It is located at the base of the spine at the tailbone in back, and the pubic bone in front. If this chakra is blocked an individual may feel fearful, anxious, insecure, and frustrated. Use red to add energy, confidence, or spark enthusiasm.

■ Second Chakra: Orange

Svadhishthana (sweetness) or the sacral chakra is located in the groin, two inches below the navel and is related to emotion, sexuality, and creativity. It relates to friendliness and emotions. If this chakra is blocked a person may feel emotionally explosive, manipulative, obsessed with thoughts of sex, or may lack energy. Add orange to help the body return to balance after shock, to regain a sense of humor, or to boost creativity.

■ Third Chakra: Yellow

Manipura (city of gems) or the solar plexus chakra is related to energy, assimilation, and digestion. It is located two inches below the breastbone in the center behind the stomach. It is the center of personal power, the place of ego, passions, impulses, anger, and strength. If this chakra is blocked a person may lack confidence, feel out of control, confused, or depressed. Yellow aids concentration, and clarity, and soothes frazzled nerves.

■ Fourth Chakra: Green

Anahata (unstruck) or the heart/emotions chakra is related to love, equilibrium, and well-being. It is located behind the breastbone in front and on the spine between the shoulder blades in back. It is the center for love, compassion, and spirituality. If this chakra is blocked a person may feel self-pity, paranoid, indecisive, afraid of letting go, or unworthy of love. Green helps restore equilibrium, allows growth and new ideas, and nurtures personal relationships.

■ Fifth Chakra: Blue

Vishuddha (pure) or the throat chakra is said to be related to communication and growth and is located in the V of the collarbone at the lower neck and is the center of communication, sound, and expression

of creativity through thought, speech, and writing. If this chakra is blocked, people may feel timid, quiet, weak, or unable to express themselves. Use blue to help clear communication, to calm chaotic states, and to achieve serenity and rest.

■ Sixth Chakra: Indigo

Ajña (command) or the third eye is linked to the pineal gland. *Ajña* is the chakra of time, awareness, and light. It is located above the physical eyes on the center of the forehead and is the center for psychic ability, higher intuition, and the energies of spirit and light. If this chakra is blocked a person may feel non-assertive, afraid of success, or egotistical. Indigo helps develop sensitivity, relieves physical, mental, and emotional pain, and helps quiet mental processes.

■ Seventh Chakra: Purple

Sahasrara (thousand-petalled crown) or the crown chakra is believed to be the chakra of consciousness. It is located just behind the top of the skull and is the center of spirituality, enlightenment, dynamic thought, and energy. If this chakra is blocked a person may experience a constant sense of frustration, lack of joy, and destructive feelings. Purple alleviates insomnia and depression, rebalances life, and promotes the use of imagination in practical ways.



consciousness, archetypal elements, colors, sounds, body functions, musical chords, and more.

Pam focused on their colors to help clear the obstructions in her chakras and heal. The result was an inspired burst of creative expression. "If I had a block, I would just go paint until it was open," says Pam. She uses heavy gobs of acrylic paint to add texture and movement to a variety of surfaces—acrylic, glass, metal, aluminum, and white boards.

These robust bursts of color seem to pulse with a life of their own. Her work is so powerful that portraitist and former gallery owner Robert Holley coined a new term for it: techno-romanticism. "Techno means reflecting the abstract quality of the age we are entering," he says. "And romanticism refers to the human application in expressing this change and age through art."

One of her first successful experiments, "all that JaZZ," is painted on an aluminum panel she found at a scrap yard and hangs prominently over the fireplace. Another signature piece displayed over the dinette, "chakraZ" is painted on an acrylic plate.

Pam has prints of her paintings made on metallic paper and mounted on one-half to one-eighth-inch Plexiglas for an almost 3-D effect. They can be purchased in a variety of sizes from 8-by-12 feet to as small as 5-by-7 inches. Large-scale designs are also available as diptychs or triptychs and, because of

the Plexiglas base, are flexible enough to be mounted on curved walls.

In just three years, she has created more than 60 works. She had a private showing during the 2005 Park City Art Festival, and her work is currently displayed at a number of local showrooms and galleries. More than a dozen pieces were also displayed in Park City during the recent Sundance Film Festival.

DeZigns by Pam are titled appropriately: "manifeZtation", "breakthru", "higher power", and "dairvoyanZ". "My maiden name is Gerzeli," she says. "I'm Hungarian and Italian, and I love my name so I add the Z to my work."

But not everyone is into chakras or the spiritual elements that inspire her work. "Our kitchen designer, Shane Tafoya, saw my piece 'gratitude' and loved it," she says. "He races motor bikes and it reminded him of speed. He told me, 'I'm not into chakras or any of that stuff. I just have to have it.'" ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: "All that JaZZ," is painted on an aluminum panel and hangs prominently over Nilisen's fireplace.

Nilisen's works "radianZ" (top) and "asoenZion" (below) demonstrate the artist's penchant for color.

Pam uses acrylic paints and a putty knife to achieve movement and depth in her painting "revelation."

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