



ARTISTIC FURNISHINGS

QUIMERA... THE ART OF HILLARY RIGGS

*This new gallery presents all forms
of the artist's creative expression.*

By Gussie Fauntleroy

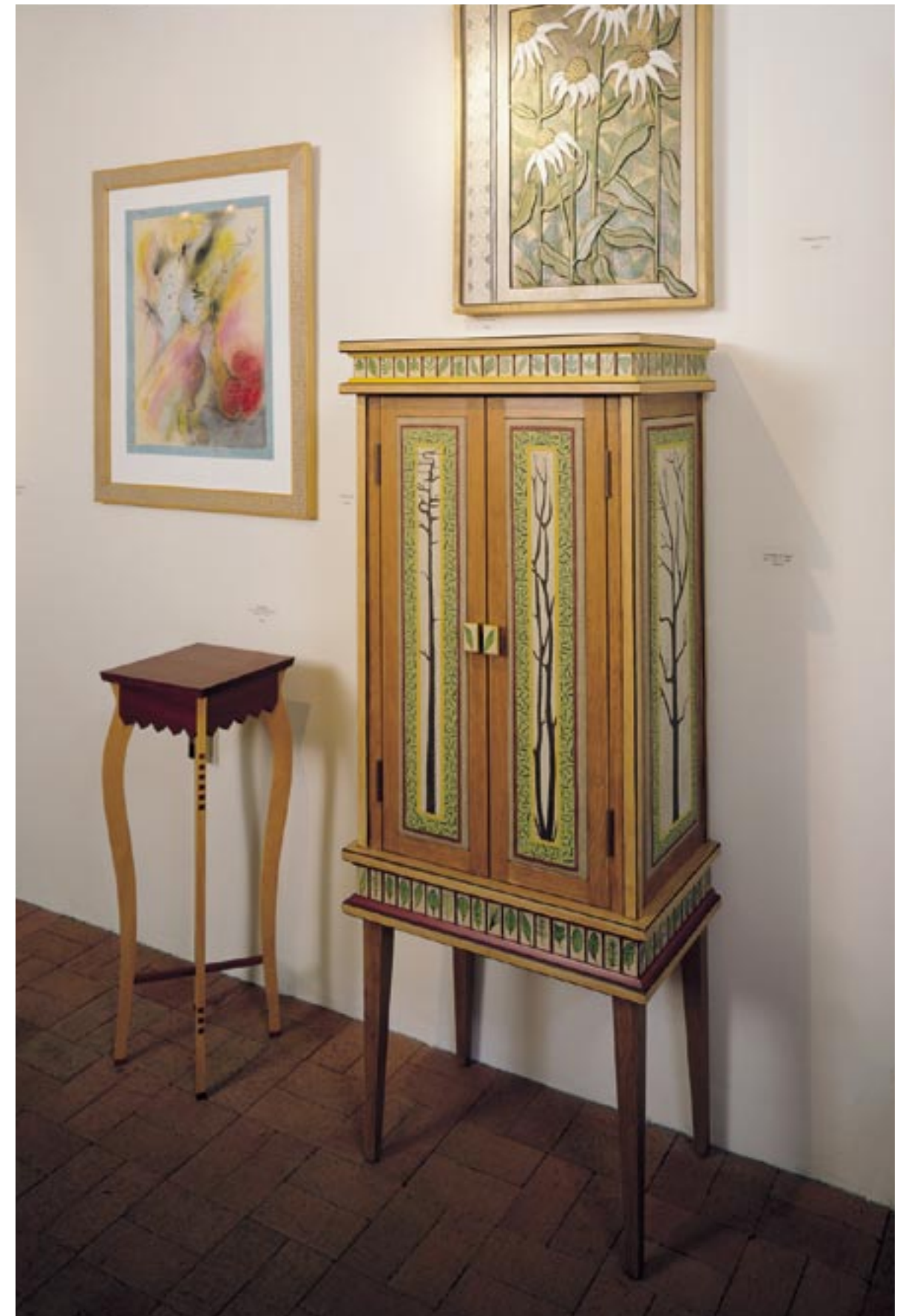
The threads of inspiration—cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual—which meet in the art of Hillary Riggs are far-reaching and diverse. They begin in the vibrant and deeply imaginative soul of Mexico, where Riggs spent her childhood, and extend to the rarified realm of chaos theory and the complex junctions of history, anthropology, consciousness, and myth. From these roots emerge artworks whose range is equally as broad. Yet they are linked by the artist's penetrating curiosity and insight, and by

the strong color and clean design of her signature style.

Over the years Riggs has focused on an evolving series of creative expressions, including decorative design, one-of-a-kind furniture, and conceptually-inspired fine art. Now all these forms may be seen side-by-side in a new gallery, Quimera: The Art of Hillary Riggs. On Palace Avenue just two blocks from the Santa Fe Plaza, the gallery offers a comfortable, inviting atmosphere that complements the artist's own aesthetic

vision. It is a move from her previous location on Guadalupe Street, and for the first time provides a space to present all sides of her creative output in one place. As such, the gallery has given Riggs a new perspective on herself as an artist.

"I used to struggle and say I don't want to do furniture anymore, that what I'm doing now is this other art. But this summer I suddenly realized, it's *all* me. What I do can be decorative or deeply intellectual. How crazy to have ever thought otherwise," she



*Cabinet: "In Honor of Trees" and wall pieces by Hillary Riggs.
Small table by Steve Sovelove*



"Raven Cabinet"
by Hillary Riggs



"Butterfly Cabinet"
by Hillary Riggs



"Pomegranate Cabinet"
by Hillary Riggs



PHOTO BY MARK NOHL

Hillary Riggs with "The Ladybug Cabinet" and
"Zebra with a Rose Chair." Fish by Alex Nugent

smiles. "Sometimes after working intently on something like the "Portals," I do want to work on furniture. It rests the intellect and the spirit."

"Portals" is Riggs' most recent series of low relief wall sculptures, which combine exquisite natural woods, carved and painted elements, and mixed media. They speak of the power of common experiences, including touch, memory, and the process of creative thinking, to open doorways into new ways of seeing the world. The artist envisions each piece as a focus point for reflection and deeper understanding.

Also on view is "The Mind at Large," a work for which Riggs has become well-known in recent years. Comprised of six large carved and painted wooden totems, "The Mind at Large" looks at the collective human experience as a shared, cumulative pool of knowledge and wisdom from which each of us emerges, and to which we each add our own discoveries and creative gifts. While this aggregate experience contains suffering and mistakes, it is also our source of power, the artist believes. As such, the totems serve as reminders of this source of power, much as traditional tribes have used totems to call up and celebrate the unseen wisdom that sustains our world.

Interspersed with these works is a selection of one-of-a-kind furniture, featuring carved and painted designs in geometric, Asian-influenced, and botanical motifs. In addition, there are examples of imaginatively carved and painted panels which may be custom-ordered as architectural elements for cabinets, doors, window valences, and room divider screens. The panels are reminiscent of Riggs' first creations with Sombraje, a highly successful and influential furniture and architectural accents business she began in 1981 when she moved to northern New Mexico from Mexico. She sold Sombraje in 1995 in order to focus on non-production furniture and fine art.

Riggs grew up in Mexico City, the daughter of American artists who owned a business employing craftspeople in hand-dyeing and weaving textiles and rugs. As a child she was immersed in a colorful, magical, pre-plastic world. She remembers hand-crafted dolls and tiny painted ceramic dishes, spirited local festivals, and the lively realm of ideas that flowed among her parents' artistic and intellectual friends.

She studied art in San Miguel de Allende at the Instituto Allende, a branch of the University of Guanajuato. During that time she spent a year in Europe in an intensive,

independent study of art history. But her interest has always extended to the scientific world as well; in high school, she recalls, her aspirations were almost equally divided between neurosurgery and art. Her current work reflects both the disciplined thinking of science and the passion of art.

After spending most of her first 30 years in Mexico, Riggs and her then-husband, Graham Nugent, moved to New Mexico and started Sombraje, producing twig-accented panels, screens, and furniture. The business established her position in the world of southwest furniture design, and also began a model of creative collaboration which she has continued throughout her career. Riggs' team, for all forms of her work, includes woodworkers Dan Stubbs and Steve Sovelove, carver Carlos Rascon, and "right-hand person" Desideria Rascon. The artist notes that her son, Alex Nugent, periodically contributes carving skills, ideas, and inspiration.

Quimera: The Art of Hillary Riggs is located at 206 East Palace Avenue (near the Plaza). Hours: 10:00-5:00 Monday-Saturday. (505) 820-0951. www.quimera-gallery.com or www.hillaryriggs.com.