

GALLERY & STUDIO

Walking westward along 14th Street, two statuesque women in impossible heels came towards me, impeccably dressed in black, followed by a man in a tuxedo with just enough of a 5 o'clock shadow to look dangerous. I glanced into a shop window, where a very smart looking security guard looked towards me with a ubiquitous secret service-style ear piece. Chic restaurants spilled onto the sidewalks and high-end boutiques winked their wares from their pristine windows. I wondered if I had stumbled onto a movie set, falling Alice-like into a parody of New York a la 'Sex in the City'...

Marina Hadley Visits The New Whitney Museum
see page 8

Presents

“Cross-Atlantic Visions”

Featuring works by

Sebastien Aurillon - John K. Lawson

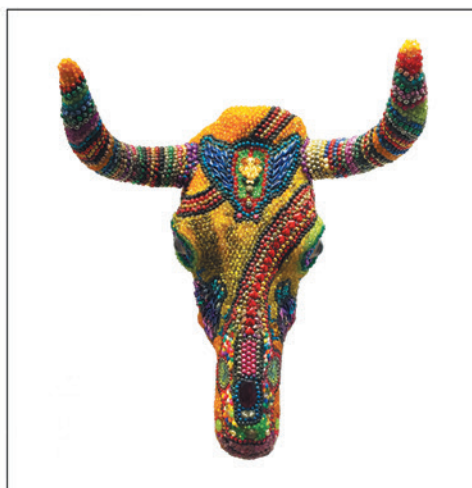
Dave Thomas - Matthew Turov

Opening reception Thursday, June 18 from 6 to 8pm

Exhibition continues until July 11, 2015



Sebastien Aurillon *“Stellar Connections”*



John K. Lawson *“Lord of the Flies”*



Dave Thomas *“A Relationship of Command”*



Matthew Turov *“Prism of Pinnacles”*

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Juliet Martin's Weavings Intuit Spirit



Formalwear: Bronze, 2015 32"H x 22"W

Juliet Martin is a versatile fiber artist who creates sculptural woven and sewn forms that can be seen in her exhibit, "I Would Wear That." She employs earth-toned yarn, some of which is loomed into tapestries that are then cut-up and reassembled in elliptical forms using canvas, velvet and metallic cloth as anchors for the weaving.

Martin demonstrates a sardonic sense of humor in the titles she chooses for her work. She says, "'I Would Wear That' is a collection of handwoven wall hangings. Their only function is to look nice. I wove with colors I like to wear. They belong on the wall, not in my laundry basket. I wish my closet looked like this."

She says her work adheres to the Japanese Zen philosophy of Saori, where it is free form, without rules or mistakes, flowing as an improvisation with its resulting imperfections in the product—raggedness and roughness—coalescing in what the artist calls "awkward beauty" and harmony. Her choices of earthy, natural colors give these abstract wall hangings eloquent complexity. The warp

and weft become part of the fiber design, integrating the framework of the piece into an organic, textured whole, evoking nature. Although the ideas of Saori do not ascribe referent meaning, to this viewer, the pieces conjure up a rich, dark forest, the splintery tree barks of rotted out logs falling across the forest floor, with subtle, warm umber yarns underscoring this feeling.

Some of the pieces in the show are more tightly woven than others. Contrasting with the forms that exhibit open areas in the weaving, allowing the anchoring, rounded backgrounds to show through, Martin also closely weaves her yarn into dense cloth and juxtaposes it with a profusion of looped yarn, protruding from the forms. This technique, tactile and pleasing, causes me to want to run my fingers through the loops, as if I were touching the wooly coat of an animal.

The artist's inventiveness is wonderfully demonstrated in the woven ellipses vertically joined together, cascading down the wall in almost archaic compositions. Although Martin presents a public demeanor that is

somewhat humorous when she describes her work, the simplicity of the sculptural forms and the organic weaving create a sense of timelessness and seriousness, with an almost shamanic aura.

The title of this show, in actuality, indicates more than humor. The work exhibits profundity in the images evoked of early history, where wearing woven cloth, many times held spiritual significance, helping to enact sacred rituals. Perhaps the artist would object, but, these pieces convey much more than sartorial decoration—in Martin's words, that they "look nice." They are an embodiment of early human history with meaning more profound than what the artist would admit. The improvisational work of Juliet Martin brings forth emotive depth to be long-savored.

—Anne Rudder

Juliet Martin
Noho M55 Gallery
530 West 25th St.
June 23 - July 11, 2015
Opening June 27, 4-6 pm

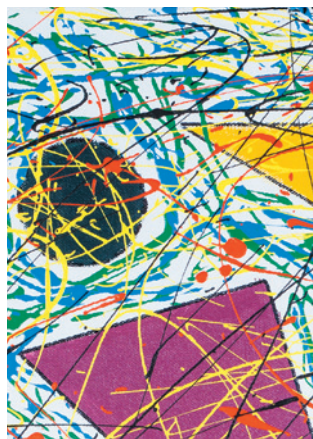
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Highlights

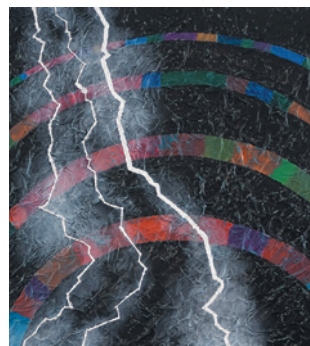
*On the Cover:
The New Whitney Museum –Page 8*



J Dann, p. 6



Dorothy A. Culpepper, p. 4



Ed Brodtkin, p. 16



Lumen Martin Winter, p. 14



Blue Mountain Gallery, p. 12



Showa Okamura, p. 18

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NEW CENTURY ARTISTS GALLERY

530 WEST 25th Street, NY, NY 10001 (212) 367 7072

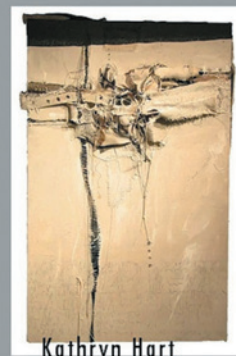
Suite 406. From June 2nd to June 27th.

Gallery Hrs: Tue- Sat 11am-6pm.

ART-5!



Basha Maryanska



Kathryn Hart

**ARTISTS: Roman Choinka, Kathryn Hart,
John Lechner, Basha Maryanska,
Anna Pietruszka.**

**OPENING RECEPTION - SAT. JUNE 6th 2015
3-6 PM**

Nobuko Tanabe: The Music of the Sea

One of the pleasures of looking at contemporary art comes with the discovery of an artist's work which is not only coherent and cognizant of itself, but is also able to bring us fully into its own world, with clarity and gentle confidence. Such has been my encounter with the lyrical and subtle work of the Japanese artist Nobuko Tanabe, currently on view at the Montserrat Gallery in Chelsea, New York City, (547 West 27th St, Suite 516). Tanabe's work is completely evocative of the sea, and the light and colors beneath its surface. It is a place where I am happy to let her take me.

Tanabe is from Tokyo, and has had numerous shows there, and also in New York. She has been written about before in this magazine at regular intervals, seemingly in parallel with the development of her work. I would like to report that in this current work, she has reached a fine state of development; she has arrived at a point of obvious lucidity and clarity. Dare I say that certain of her prior artistic experiments can be considered successfully concluded? Such is the case. The work she is now presenting is a skilled combination of texture and color, as before. The artist uses very fine Japanese paper to construct rippling patterns of waveforms, to which she then applies color of natural and organic tones: blues, greens, browns. The result is a work of sinuous form, subtle color and luminescence. She has used these techniques often in her past work, but these elements have now come together masterfully.

But first, Music. I must talk about her work in terms of music, because the works evoke more than the merely visual. Contrasted with the purely visual arts, music is a different art form in its temporal quality. But it is to me the most clearly connected art form to Tanabe's. I really don't feel comfortable in discussing Tanabe's paintings (if you even wish to call them that) in terms of so-and-so's brushwork, or someone else's thematic concerns. No, I can't be satisfied in discussing only that pertaining to the visual. The works seem to conjure up a temporal element, a music of their own: the time in which they are within your field of view, and later, the time that their image remains in the mind's eye. Tanabe's paintings are pieces of music that create their own sensations in the mind. Yes, the eyes are necessary to perceive the color, but the 'tones' of the painting come to me much as the tones of a cello played solo, a Debussy nocturne, (or of course, "La Mer"), come through the ear into the intuitive part of the brain. Might one even refer to Tanabe's works by familiar names such as "Sonata" or "Suite"? Yes, perhaps,



"Muddy Stream"

but I am reluctant to use such words descriptive of Western Classical music, with its definitions, forms and boundaries. This is one quality of the Western tradition that is comfortably abandoned here. Really, these works play their own music, a more natural music. They make me think of the "music" of waves breaking on a pebbly shore.

In talking about these works, I am reluctant to begin making connections to other Western artists of various periods, or adding to the discussion of East/West aesthetics. Comparisons of her work have been made in the past to the artists of the New York School (Pollock, de Kooning, et al), also to the Color Field painters (Olitski, Rothko), and even to the (widely differing) impasto techniques of Van Gogh and Albert Pinkham Ryder. All of these comparisons can be found and pointed out, it is true. But there is something about Tanabe's lyrical paintings which makes me want to expand the creative comparisons far beyond that of the painted image, beyond the two dimensional form of a work held within the confines of a frame; beyond the confines of a gallery wall, beyond the confines of even an object. These works seem to be a small portion of something much more vast: the Oceans of the Earth.

The work seems to easily bypass the idea of boundaries, to extend beyond the framed pictures placed on the gallery wall. They have an open and limitless quality; they seem to be a microscopic portion of something immense. Water, but great, unlimited expanses of water. The sea, perhaps, which surrounds the homeland

of the artist, deep and pure, with only the very slightest hint of the potential for the danger of the sea, of the destructive tsunami that have struck the Japanese islands over the centuries. This is not, however, the sea in which Tanabe chooses to immerse us. We see the gentle subtleties of a clear sea and the light which penetrates its surface, changed and colored by its passage through these waters, and the movements of the light over the surfaces beneath the waters. The paintings make us think of the light blending on equal terms with the colored surfaces below the water. As it would be when one peers into the clear sea from above.

But there is a much fuller experience available to those who are able to take the next step: actually entering the world of light and water and color, as these works take us. I cannot help but think of an experience I once had in the sea, on a trip to another side of the planet. Camped by the edge of some of the clearest water in the world, I had not originally conceived of this world existing right in front of me. But it called me in. I went into the sea immediately and spent hours every day there. The visibility in this sea is astounding, 100 feet or more, including straight down. At the time, I was equipped only with a mask and snorkel tube, and was content to putter along the surface of the water, viewing with amazement the spectacle of colors, patterns and textures laid out all around me. The changes the water made to the light and colors below was something utterly invisible to those who would never venture below the surface of the water. With just the mask, I could penetrate only so far. A couple of days later, irresistibly and inevitably, I made my first scuba dive, entering this world bodily.

This is the sense of Tanabe's works that impresses me. It is not merely a window, like the glass of the snorkel mask, to some other kind of vision. It is a journey fully below the surface, not only as an entry point, but also a portion of the journey itself. This is what successful art does, in my book. It shows you something that is there for the Seeing, but also there for the Feeling and the Imagining. A thing which is a complete world of its own, and a clear evocation of that world. And, most significantly, perhaps, we learn that through the artist, there is more of this world available to us. We want to spend more time in this world. Tanabe's Sea is vast.

—David Rodgers

Nobuko Tanabe
recently seen at Montserrat Contemporary
Art Gallery, 547 West 27th St.
Her work can also be viewed
in the year-round salon.

Dorothy A. Culpepper: A Celebration

Dorothy A. Culpepper is a woman of action. Gazing at her body of work unleashes a vertiginous vocabulary of verbs within the viewer. “Rhythmic skeins,” as one reviewer described it, that swirl and swing, splash, splat and slide, glide and gallop; they clot, they cluster, they careen; they drift, they drip and drop across the expanses of her canvases.

In the style for which she is probably the best known now, we are reminded

bearing unseen messages, they drift airborne onto a luminous background. These are exhibited side by side with her very gestural works, complementing, expanding and framing the fluid language of Culpepper’s artistic expression.

Twenty paintings will be exhibited in her upcoming solo show called “Fractals.” It is her 20th in the Montserrat Contemporary Art Gallery at 547 West 27th Street in Manhattan’s

light-hearted gaiety, a near-childlike flight of fancy—however sophisticated—a delight in life and living. Her works quite literally dance before our eyes.

“I have always been interested in painting ever since I was ten years old,” she says. Her parents, however, took a very dim view of any artistic ambition their daughter harbored, as was typical of the era when she was growing up. Women were supposed to be wives and



“Among Marbles” 1 & 2

of Jackson Pollock, whom she had never met. But her “brush” is different. While it is just as gestural, it is more delicate. The lighter touch in her work is not to say that it is devoid of strength. Culpepper’s paintings combine both grace and gusto. At 83, Culpepper still paints her canvases spread out on the floor. The technique may be similar, but the “touch” is not. She has different lyrics to her song. As a Caribbean friend put it: “They jump, they jive, they jaunty.”

Something new has been added to this exhibit’s exuberant mix of linear lace-like tracery, lively lines against the more solid, but pale, near-transparent, geometry. Colorful structured shapes seemingly float—the “fractals” of the exhibit’s title—forms held aloft by a joyful breeze in some of these airy works. Reminiscent of kites, beach balls, even rectangular-shaped “envelopes”

Chelsea, scheduled from July 15 to August 22.

For those not on familiar footing with fractals, the word comes from the French via Latin, meaning broken or uneven. Used in mathematical or the parlance of physics, they are essentially geometrical or physical structures having an irregular or uneven shape. What is neither broken, nor uneven, is Culpepper’s art. It follows an ever-ascending arc in works sometimes (once) mural-sized, sometimes intimate, always captivating. “I like to let people make up what they see...Each person should see something different.” In her view, communication, without a doubt, is in the eyes of the beholder. And “something different” should be Culpepper’s middle name.

Culpepper trips the bright fantastic with obvious joy. Her playfulness is manifest in these new works, perhaps more than ever before. They exude a

mothers, and not—God forbid—artists. It could be said that she was a late bloomer. But bloom she did. “I read a lot of books, joined art groups, worked in oils, watercolors and acrylics. Art had always been in the back of my mind.” Culpepper took up her brushes in a serious way when she was 40. As she expressed it, “Painting just took over.” Jackson Pollock’s style intrigued her—to whom she has been compared, but never met. Painting on the floor, she explains, is “natural” to her.

She also admires many other artists whose artistic expressions are very dissimilar to her own: they include Helen Frankenthaler, with whom she studied, Nancy Graves, Kenneth Noland and Paul Jenkins.

A native of Cincinnati, Culpepper now lives in New Mexico. “Landscapes have always influenced me. Earth colors, flowers, the colors of the West inspired



"Storm"

me." An unpretentious and modest artist, she intimates that her paintings all but paint themselves. "A lot of my paintings come from the inside. They have a mind of their own." If that's the case, then the only mind they have must be Culpepper's.

With respect to her current incorporation of structural shapes into her gestural action images, she explains the evolution with typical self-effacement. "I had done pencil on paper shapes before. Then I needed to do something different [for the acrylic works]. I would draw freeform, then outline them—a geometric shape here, a triangle there—lines over them. I would just start and some things just happened."

"I am an action painter—an Abstract Expressionist—but I started out as an Impressionist. I painted landscapes, as well as portraits, which I turned

into Picassos." Now, Culpepper paints intuitively. As she puts it, "Expression is what I do when I paint. I just do it. I don't actually think about it. It just flows."

The energy emanating from her work suggests immediacy, a fast-paced timing. Not necessarily so. "Sometimes I wait a while. It depends on how I feel, and the weather." That said, she describes herself as active. "I want to be busy and enjoy life." One is left convinced that she is doing just exactly that.

The twin paintings, "Among the Marbles" #1 and #2, are sun-filled images, as fun as their titles suggest, where an itinerary of lines and small splats—visual clinks of imaginary unheard sounds—suggests the game we used to play as children—those of "a certain age" before the digital era.

"Storm," evokes the vortex, the blue



"Red Rain"

eye of a tempest, where windblown strands and gusts of wind whirl, whipping elements about—perhaps debris—against a sun-soaked, summer-buttery backdrop. Dark threads spread and splay, sew together the background, weaving the proverbial tangled web.

"Purple Kite Down" is the perfect illustration of where Culpepper's action painting and fractals combine—linear trails of various guidelines steering multi-shaped forms; "kites" take to the air, save one—the "purple kite" seems not to crash land, but to descend delicately toward an unseen ground. "Beyond Stargate" is a variation on the same

Continued on page 17

Dorothy A. Culpepper
July 15 - August 2, 2015
Reception: Thurs. July 16, 6-8 pm
Montserrat Contemporary Art Gallery, 547 West 27th St.
Her paintings are also available in the
year-round Salon Exhibition

J Dann: Painter, Printmaker and Poet:

J Dann is a serial thriller. She once described her art as “lyrical abstraction.” It is an apt assessment.

Her various series recall the movements of a musical score, by turn allegro and andante. Not surprising.

Her youthful background was submerged in music, having studied both piano and harpsichord in conservatories in Strasbourg and Paris. Growing up, concerts, museums, and galleries were the constant venues of a very cultivated youth, thanks to a highly culture-oriented mother.

This duet of her artistic bent led her to teach music, drawing and painting eventually in various venues until 2001. She participated in or created other art establishments, such as the Fine Arts Fair and Contemporary Arts that mixed the Arts, Music and Slam, in places like Magnac Laval and Limoges, where she now resides. That’s only the half of it. However, since 2011, J Dann has reportedly conserved her energy, reserving it for traveling and exhibiting thither and yon.

J Dann has been a busy lady. In the past two years alone, she has exhibited in France—Montmorillon, Beaugard Castle in Blois, Aix en Provence, Limoges, at the Grand Palais and the “Tre’car 17” Monod Gallery in Paris. She has also exhibited in Seoul (the Franco-Korean National Assembly), the Broadway Gallery in New York, as well as Spectrum Miami in Florida.

But if her classical musical education was the dominant keynote, drawing and writing had always been a part of her life. And a good thing that was too, as a serious road accident changed the course of that life and steered her toward the plastic arts.

Her artistic expression encompasses both oil and acrylic paintings, mixed media, prints and works in India ink.

A native of Louveciennes, she was



familiar with the landscape that shaped and inspired Sisley and Pissarro. (She attended the Academy of La Grande Chaumière in Paris—a school somewhat similar to the Art Students League in New York.) Her images are not landscapes, but mindscapes—a language all of their own—and that is precisely the way she describes her work. For her, “painting and printmaking are like the written word...a way of self-expression, of talking...by way of gesture, forms and colors...that reveal and communicate everything words cannot.” The unsaid. The unsayable. The undefinable. The effervescent.

A poet, as well as a painter and printmaker, her images are akin to a love letter to those looking at her work—listening to the “palpitation of the heart and of life.” As she put it: “It is a gift to those who wish to receive it....It is a gift of self that we do, sharing without expectation of return. It is the breath of the soul.”

Her palette is basically tricolored, but nothing short of dramatic. Red and yellow flames spread across an ebony abyss of space. An occasional earthy shade brings us—almost—to the earthbound creatures we are.

In musical terms, one thinks about the

Variations on a French Theme, A score for a life



"Veines du temps" diptyque 15



"Vertige"

SUMMER 2015

darker passages of Beethoven's scores, Wagnerian operas, perhaps. A touch of Carmen at times, but maybe, above all, The Firebird. J Dann's work takes flight in every sense of the word.

If the colors are in-your-face blatant and brilliant, the forms are more visceral. The shapes spiral, they swirl, they squiggle and streak across a black background. They coil and curl, like flicks of a fire within—a molten lava of the soul, so to speak—yielding sparks that ascend and arc. Other strokes curve, scythes slicing and harvesting a darkly seared and scorched sky.

"Tre'car 17" is a perfect illustration

of J Dann's work. A tangerine solar wind seems to sweep through an ink-dark background, interlocking with an orange S-shaped swirl. Their soaring strokes engender a trail of wavy flame-like forms.

"Veines du temps..." reprieves the arc form streaks of fire dancing against an ebony sky, bursting into flame at the upper left of the canvas.

"Vertige," while preserving the artist's palette of orange-reds, yellow and black, is a far more organic piece suggesting the concept of an inner flame, of a "fire in the belly." And then, of course, there is the texture. J Dann has incorporated sand in the pigment, grounding the fleeing forms onto the pictorial space.

Despite this seemingly somber scenario, J Dann's work is anything but. It is vibrant; it soars—perhaps toward her dreams. And ours.

J Dann, without a doubt, is noteworthy.

—Diane Root

J Dann "Path to Life" can be seen at
Montserrat Contemporary Art Gallery,
547 West 27th St.

June 24 - July 11, 2015

Reception: Thursday, June 25, 6 - 8 pm

Her paintings are also available in the
year-round Salon Exhibition

Whitney Museum of American Art



Walking westward along 14th Street, two statuesque women in impossible heels came towards me, impeccably dressed in black, followed by a man in a tuxedo with just enough of a 5 o'clock shadow to look dangerous. I glanced into a shop window, where a very smart looking security guard looked towards me with a ubiquitous secret service-style ear piece. Chic restaurants spilled onto the sidewalks and high-end boutiques winked their wares from their pristine windows. I wondered if I had stumbled onto a movie set, falling Alice-like into a parody of New York a la 'Sex in the City'.

It made me wonder if the Whitney, with its new 'responsive W' logo and its new Renzo Piano designed home in the 'glamorous Meat Packing District', was going to be so trendy and 'A' list, that it would be uncomfortable for mere plebeians like me. I admit to a personal sentimentality to the previous building, built by Marcel Breuer on Madison Avenue. That womb-like building with little natural light was where I first started my serious study of contemporary art, where I got to know the likes of Hopper, Calder, O'Keeffe, LeWitt, and Oldenburg; trying to understand the development and the drivers of American artists.

So it was with trepidation and some reluctance that I was visiting the museum's

new home.

I need not have worried. I turned the corner onto Washington Street and smelt it. The waft of raw meat. The heart of the old neighborhood was still beating. I saw Hector's Café and Diner. The old place was still there, only accepting cash, serving blue plate specials and apple pie. I walked under the High Line and up to the museum with a lighter step. The building is all glass, steel and concrete, anchored with Danny Meyer's latest swanky restaurant ... but flanked by a fleet of hot dog carts and with the NYC sanitation department in the background! This was still the stewpot of New York.

HISTORY

The Whitney owes its inception to its namesake the sculptor, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney (1875-1942), great granddaughter of one of the richest men in American history, railroad and shipping magnate, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and the wife of Harry Payne Whitney a wealthy lawyer and philanthropist. In 1989 Gertrude visited the studio of John La Farge. In purchasing his work she initiated a desire to start acquiring works by American artists at a time when it was at best unfashionable and at worst radical to buy them. It was not her aim to create a collection but merely to support the artists

in whom she believed, giving them financial support and artistic recognition, allowing them to follow their artistic instincts.

In 1907 Gertrude bought a studio in Greenwich Village, where she was able to work seriously as a sculptor. It became a meeting place for artists and her reputation as an artist and a patron of the arts grew. She hosted several private exhibitions but realized that a purpose-built space was necessary to exhibit the artists that she was supporting. In 1914, she established the Whitney Studio to promote American artists, presenting more than 30 exhibitions in the following 14 years, helped by Juliana Force. Additionally she created the Studio Club and Shop to provide a social meeting place and a retail outlet for their art, which was eventually replaced by the Whitney Studio Galleries. By 1929 however, Gertrude and Juliana felt strongly that a collection, housed in a museum, was necessary to further promote American artists and their art. Gertrude offered her collection of some 400 pieces to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. However in a quirk of fate, they condescendingly refused her offer. It didn't take Gertrude and Juliana long to make the decision to start their own museum for artists.

The doors to the Whitney Museum of American Art opened in November 1931.



Edward Hopper, 1882-1967, "Early Sunday Morning, (1930)"
Oil on canvas, 35 3/16 x 60in. (89.4 x 152.4 cm)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney 31.426 © Whitney Museum of American Art

During the following 83 years, the museum moved twice, changed its position on what constituted "American" as well as what gifts and donations to accept and from whom. The tenets for acquisitions changed frequently and the collection eventually grew to 22,000 pieces. It was time for a new home.

NEW HOME

So here is the latest home of the Whitney. Renzo Piano, an Italian architect created a space for American art that he defined. "Art is freedom, but American art is especially free, bit wild, slightly impolite but free". He built a museum that he feels is worthy of this art. I use the term 'space' because the building provides it. The building has 50,000 square feet of gallery space and 13,000 square feet of outdoor sculpture terraces that cascade down the side of the building from the 8th floor and brings you within touching distance of the fashionable, elevated, urban park, the High Line.

There are vantage points that allow you to see across the Hudson to the Wild West. To the East the wild city of New York is laid out with the Con-Ed and Empire State buildings vying for attention with the iconic water-towers and the streets below.

The inaugural exhibition, *America Is Hard To Find*, is a retrospective of American art from 1901 to the present day, taken entirely from the permanent collection, bar one piece on loan. It is divided into four eras and 23 chapters with an additional exhibition of some of the members of the original Studio Club on the free-entry first floor gallery. The entire exhibition has some 600 pieces of artwork by 400 artists that the curators have chosen to show the depth and breadth of 115 years of American art. The broadly chronological order allows the novice to understand the historical development of styles and concepts. The chapters are an interesting way of creating themes or mini-exhibitions to interest some of the more experienced or jaded art viewers. Some of the ideas are stronger than others and one or two were a stretch, but it was a Herculean

SUMMER 2015

task that they undertook well. With so many iconic, strong and rarely seen pieces it was hard to pick the highlights.

One of my favorites is Lee Krasner's "The Seasons" painted the year after her husband, Jackson Pollock, died in a car accident. I have always thought that Krasner was the stronger painter of the couple and for the Whitney to give her, her own wall from where she regally surveys her colleagues' work—including her husband's smaller painting—seems as a just display of her standing in history. The label quotes Krasner "...the question came up whether one would continue painting at all and I guess this was my answer." She came out with paint brushes blazing. I was also mesmerized by Peter Saul's "Saigon" painted in 1967. The practically fluorescent colors and exaggerated imagery at first glance seem comical, until a further study shows his vehement condemnation of the Vietnam War. I found it hard to look at but it kept me hostage for a long time.

There are several chapters that were really powerful and could easily be stand-alone exhibitions. *Machine Ornament*, on the 8th floor, brings together art depicting industrialization and mechanization after World War I. Elsie Driggs' "Pittsburgh," is an oil painting of the steel mills that she admitted "shouldn't be beautiful. But it is." Joseph Stella's "Brooklyn Bridge: Variation on an old Theme" painted in 1939 is an oil on canvas but could easily, at over 70 inches tall, appear as a stained glass window in an old stone church. It is dynamic and whoever wrote the label for it was obviously as impressed as I was, using the term "awesome" in his description of the bridge. It's not a term you expect from a cultural institution such as the Whitney, but I know how they feel!

In *Breaking the Prairie*, on the 7th floor, Edward Hopper's "Railroad Sunset" is very evocative. It's one of those paintings that I see very differently depending on my mood. I can see it as being glorious, sad, provocative, menacing and peaceful and much more depending on the day. Bill Traylor's "Walking Man," a blue silhouette of an elegant man



Edward Ruscha (b. 1937). *Large Trademark with Eight Spotlights*, 1962. Oil, house paint, ink, and graphite pencil on canvas, Overall: 66 15/16 x 133 1/8in. (170 x 338.1 cm).
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from the Mrs. Percy Uris Purchase Fund 85.41 © Ed Ruscha

with a walking stick and a grey tall hat, is one of those works which were a bit of a stretch to be included into this chapter, as he was a native of Alabama which, when I last looked, wasn't a prairie and the man could be walking anywhere let alone a prairie. None the less, Traylor is an excellent example of both folk art and self-taught genres.

Rose Castle which features artists influenced by Surrealism has two iconic Edward Hoppers as well as George Tooker's "The Subway"; three different mediums by Man Ray and a very powerful, beautiful and somehow compassionate painting of a dead black crow by Andrew Wyeth, "Winter Fields." These all lived up to the unsettling, psychologically twisted and mesmerizing reputation of this genre.

White Target is the minimalist chapter, starring Frank Stella, Agnes Martin, Ellsworth Kelly, Jo Baer, John McLaughlin and Ad Reinhardt's "Abstract Painting," the totally black canvas which after careful scrutiny gives up its secret of nine squares, and was admirably explained to a skeptical museum visitor by docent Katherine Cerullo. Carmen Herrera's "Blanco y Verde" is a new acquisition and a nice addition. A surprise omission was Clyfford Still. The museum has only three of his pieces, but the fore-father of abstract expressionism could have merited a space.

On the 6th floor, *Large Trademark* has the iconic Jasper John's "Three Flags," Andy Warhol's "Green Coca-Cola Bottles" and Claes Oldenbourg's "Giant Fagends." The one stand-out however is Malcolm Bailey's untitled work. At first glance it looks like a blue-print schematic, with a logo in the middle. It is actually a representation of a slave ship, outlined in bodies with a drawing of a cotton plant the beautiful image in the center. It made me stop and think of the slave trade.

The 5th floor opens with a double whammy of *Racing Thoughts* and *Letters from the War Front*. The first covers the consumerism of the 1980s with Jeff Koons' "New Hoover Convertibles, Green, Blue," "New Hoover Convertibles, Green," and

"Blue Doubledecker." Also Nam June Paik's "V-ramid", a forty television and video assemblage, and Richard Prince's "Spiritual America," the disturbing nude image of a ten year old Brooke Shields. The second chapter focuses on the subject of the AIDS epidemic featuring works by David Moffett accusing President Reagan of inaction, Sue Coe's warning of the proximity of the threat and David Armstrong's haunting image of his boyfriend.

Distracting Distance showcases 'new-media' artists. One of the Whitney's favored artists, Cory Arcangel is here with his "Super Mario Clouds," which is interestingly curated with cables and game systems strewn across the floor. I listened to Christopher Lew, a curator expertly explaining Josh Kline's "Cost of Living" which is a janitor's cart carrying items created on a 3D printer.

It is here that the spirit of Gertrude Vanderbilt lives on, trusting these young artists to create works for the museum unhindered, following their artistic instincts. It is a guiding principle that Scott Rothkopf, the newly promoted Chief Curator, will hopefully be able to sustain. It's not perfect. There are some wrinkles in both the building

and the exhibition. The ticket lines are long, the elevators slow and the staircases are narrow causing congestion even at quiet times. The current exhibition floors are difficult to navigate with the numerous chapters laid out haphazardly to the uninitiated visitor with bottlenecks throughout.

However overall it is a wonderful new venue and the exhibition is really worth seeing.

Trying to see everything in one visit however is to risk visual, mental and emotional indigestion and utter exhaustion. I recommend several visits if at all possible. Make time to visit the outdoor sculptures, perhaps have a quick bite to eat in the café and if you're lucky, sit in the armchairs at the West end of the 5th floor



Robert Henri, 1865 1929 "Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, (1916)"
Oil on canvas, Overall: 49 15/16 x 72 in. (126.8 x 182.9 cm)
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Gift of Flora Whitney
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under the wall painting by Jonathan Borofsky "Running People." You won't regret it.

—Marina Hadley

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Dreams & Reflections, West Side Arts Coalition

The recent exhibit "Dreams & Reflections 2015," curated by Chevalier Daniel C. Boyer and Lady Silvia Soares Boyer at the West Side Arts Coalition, was a mixed media festival for the eyes.

Beginning with Marie Robison's collages. Robison presents us with two sides of her artistic personality; one is with "Passages," a hard edge image of purple watercolor strips implying a portal to the piece layered beneath it. This is a contemplative group of paper shards, lined up in Zen-like order and behind lies a pentimento of texture and color, like a small paradise waiting to be discovered.

Nate Ladson knows about color which he demonstrates in his works, "Streak of Blue" and "Transformer of Color—which he is. Both works show a dexterity with the use of texture as well as a subtlety in the blending of his deft, painterly works as yellow, orange and blue sing and create heat on the canvas.

In a complete turn of the brush and approach, Marguerite Borchardt shares her love of the landscape and the natural world in "Berkshire Pond" and takes us to a place of tranquility in this painting. She combines varieties of green we see in nature and paints with a delicate touch that manifests a reverence for her subject matter with each stroke. The pond hints of dark water, vine-tangled, primal and mysterious.

The delight of this exhibit is the diversity of each artist's work that demonstrates their styles just like their individual fingerprints. Daniel C. Boyer jumps right into the great "art pond" in his three works. I not only admired his art, but also his witty, quirky titles such as, "Dad Needs A New Suit" Before The World Is Flooded with Dots and Thai Tea We Present the Baron to the Skeletal Baboons. We may also have a poet on our hands, since Boyer is both nimble with language and paintbrush. The blues and greens in this abstract piece combine an

excellent compositional sense in his marks, thus allowing the viewer to jump right into that same art pond.

Amy Rosenfeld's "Rebirth In Spring" deals with a subject matter often ignored in art; the joy and wonder of birth. She presents her work simply and in straight-forward way with a fulsome human figure in orange and yellow against a dark ground. She writes words inside the mother figure, all the ways in which our world births itself. There is power in that naming which makes her approach unique.

Peter Schepper shows in several pieces his connection to pop culture and has his hand on the pulse of what is current. The piece that illuminates is "Fight Breast Cancer". It is framed in a soft, boa material as if held together by a red cloud, rendering the fragility of the human body. In the center circle is the message of a woman free and healthy flying on Pegasus to a place called planet wonder. This work illustrates hope, respect and love of women and is impressive.

If you believe in magic, or the great mysteries of our universe, you'll admire Silvia Soares Boyer's "On The Science of Pentagram III," based on the power of the number five and its multiple sources, such as the five wounds of Christ on the cross, and the five fingers and toes of the human body. It is also reflective in Pythagoras' interest in the pentagram and the Golden Ratio, or correct ordering of the world. Boyer's bold, and beautifully arranged piece elucidates balance and harmony in a group of stars, with a dominant center, all with precise intersecting gold lines on black. It is an elegant work in its design.

As New Yorkers, we all have memories of visiting the Russian Tea Room, or are familiar with its lore. Adrienne Cosner exemplifies charm with her naïve style in the piece called, "Russian Tea Room". The composition in this work is pleasing and feels

like a bold, abstract painting with a loose, grid layout and blocks of color. The upper left corner insinuates the nighttime blues and a melancholy entrenched in the streets. Wedged next to this, black blocks with small squares show a lone light burning. At the right side is a light pink building that depicts the tea room with its memorable red awning. This part of the painting is in daylight, in contrast to the cryptic portrayal of the ineffable New York nights.

Dammika D. Ranasinghe loves pattern and color which is presented in two of her works, "North American Beetles" and "Spring Arrives in 2015". In the beetle piece there are orange, yellow, and blue splashes that create a felicitous design, in a vibrant and playful spirit. In the Spring piece she creates a more specific pattern with a folk style tulip and green icon in a celebration of warm tones.

Pattern and repetition abound in Dimuthu Ranasinghe's art, yet in his own style and color choice using muted blues, purples and dusty pinks. The mood in this work is mercurial, from serious to light hearted. The most engaging piece is "Spring Sparks" as if it were breaking open the color spectrum in blues, greens, oranges and a light purple background.

We end with BA Djibril Ngawa's animated paintings. There's an elan and passion in his paint strokes especially in "Mixed Crowd" that combines a washy mixture with confident line work alluding to the human figure. There is an indication of sorrow, yet it is surrounded by a border of yellow redolent of the idea that light surrounds us in our world if we look for it.

—Christine Graf

"Dreams & Reflections, 2015" was recently seen at Broadway Mall Community Center, 96th St. (center island) April 1 - 19, 2015.

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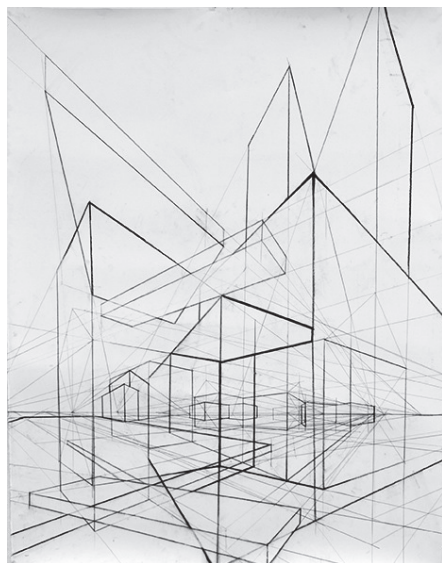
Blue Mountain Gallery Thesis Exhibition

At the Blue Mountain Gallery is the Connecticut State University MFA Thesis Exhibition 2015. This year eight graduate students present their work.



Kanika Khurana

Kanika Khurana, born in Delhi, India came to study at WCSU in 2013. Her use of traditional materials as well as digital in her project, “Metta” which means loving kindness, is demonstrated in the work where a joyful woman makes contact with blue butterflies breaking free from their large scale cocoons. This is an art work of discovery, as if Khurana might’ve been a butterfly opening her wings to a new culture. The woman in the painting is smiling at witnessing the birth of these oversized butterflies as if it was an everyday occurrence. And in this world of benevolence she creates—on the lawn in front of a building that could be the university—flight and beauty are born. The palette consists of muted mid tone colors, drawn with a soft, hoary look of colored pencils giving the images depth and texture that appears other worldly. The face, hair and coat of the woman on the right side is featured prominently,



Kerri Gaudelli

and creates a balanced, harmonious composition between the human and the natural world. This piece is a skilled rendering of Khurana’s intention to celebrate that loving kindness in her art.

Kerri Gaudelli combines a minimalist palette with the complexities of science, perspective, and our place in the universe. In stark contrast to the other works in the exhibit, Gaudelli limits herself to line only as if she were inventing a new lexicon; a mysterious calligraphy based on philosophy, and existentialism. At the top of the piece titled “Coma Berenices,” lines soar to an open space reaching beyond the linear confluence of black and gray cables, that meet, intersect and pass one another. It makes me question if we are all traveling in the same way in our angular, wired world. What would happen if we stopped somewhere in one of the overlapping points, or at the spot where she placed a floating, yellow rectangle in the distance, that is a respite in this thought provoking work?



Stacey Kolbig

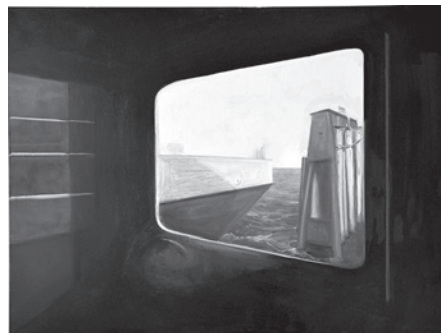
Stacy Kolbig works with intersecting lines, but in three dimensions with thread and paper. In her work, titled “Tie That Binds #2,” torn shards of paper are rolled, folded, and twisted to create a synthesis of line and form that demonstrates a strong sculptural sensibility. Kolbig’s choice to use something as ephemeral as paper and thread implies that what is bound, or locked up, is also fragile by the very nature of it being secreted. What keeps us shackled is almost always in our mind and perhaps Kolbig is showing us that we can break free with one good push. I admire the shapes and forms in this

work, as it tries to unleash what might be holding it back. I look forward to seeing more of her art in other media.



Colleen McGuire

Colleen McGuire’s piece called “The Bedroom” harkens back to Edward Hopper in mood and style. I look into this room and want to know who sleeps there. It appears to be a bedroom that is lived in, with a tower of books on the night stand, an overstuffed closet, and casually made bed. Perhaps a long time married couple lives there, or not to assume the obvious, maybe a single person who is an avid reader. The room elicits two emotions: a calm and ordered beauty in its pale colors, in the soft folds of the blanket, sheets and pillows which I want to touch. Is the bed still warm? I take in the texture of the paint technique in the shaded areas of the fabric. The room also evokes the loneliness of Hopper, yet it doesn’t just leave us with that. The sun, in a sliver of yellow from the window on the left side offers the possibility of a new day.



Jill Harrington Nichols

We enter an entirely different mood when we step into Jill Harrington Nichols piece, “Point of Departure” and into what might be the port window of a boat. Inside this space is a rectangular window that looks out onto a chunk of a concrete dock on the left and another tower shaped dock on the

right. What is striking in this work are the bold, abstracted shapes that allude to a painting within a painting and of a landscape in the distance. I admire the dark blue that acts as a frame far from the scene of the window. The painting in this area moves from almost black to hints of blended light on the left side of the piece. This creates drama and power from the walls inside to the choppy sea outside. The arrangement of elements of the geometric hulk on the inside of the picture frame is perpendicular to the orange dock and merges vertically in the water against a faded horizon line. This makes for a unique, poised point of view and a well crafted style of painting.



Peri Pfenninger

Peri Pfenninger's "Fallen Memories" is not only about the mystery and ever changing nature of water, but also about paint and what it can do when it is in the right hands; and Pfenninger uses those artist's hands well. I am mesmerized when I look at this work with the shimmering light of the blue green water, and the subtle drops of color in the fallen leaves scattered across the darker part of the painting. At the top left is a shaft of light that illuminates the rushing water in contrast to leaves of red and gold. There are both calm and swirling eddies that allow chiaroscuro to create beautiful contrasts throughout. I am impressed by this engaging work, and even if Pfenninger's art is braided with loss, there is a reverence for life and an acknowledgement of the changes life brings just like the mutability of water. This work seeks consolation, as we all do when we make art, and it is offered in this painting.

Abbie Rabinowitz paints a subject that we don't see much; the intimate portrait of an older couple embracing one another in sleep. My immediate reaction to this work was palpable as if



Abbie Rabinowitz

I knew these people who were taking a midday nap, in a long marriage, each offering comfort. I wanted to be the woman embracing that man and with that connection. Rabinowitz brings us back to earth with these two comely, light-filled bodies. I am attracted to the manner in which she paints the skin tones, with whites and off whites, the angled strokes, and the detail of the age marks on the woman's hand in the front. This work is an affirmation of being human, of love, of touching and being moored to a long time lover. My hope is that Rabinowitz will continue many of these intimate stories.



Corinne Speidel

Corinne Speidel honors the Wabi Sabi philosophy which represents the Japanese aesthetic centered on the acceptance of transience and imperfection which come from Buddhist

teachings. Spiedel creates surfaces that appear aged and worn, filled with textures achieved through her handmade papers. This work could be any number of surfaces; a sidewalk, the edifice of a crumbling building, a disintegrating road. It could also come from the natural world, from the scabrous skins of rock substratum or the forest floor. She makes a connection visually between the natural world and the man made and lets us wonder and wander in her elegant, abstractions.

In this show, I am impressed overall with the quality of work, of these featured artists. There's not only skill in their work but they also present to us our humanity—how we are connected to one another and to nature and how critical that bond is to our future. My hope is that in works to come these artists will continue to go deeper as they develop and grow, and I look forward to what they will have to say to us. We better be ready to listen and to look.

—Christine Graf

"Five Artists"
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The Spirit of the Horse: Lumen Martin Winter (1908-1982)



Three Horses, watercolor, pencil, size 10 1/2" x 15 1/2"

Lumen Martin Winter (1908-1982) is an artist almost unknown today. The rediscovery of this artist is not as uncommon as one first thinks, with artists who have spent a large part of their careers as muralists. In this exhibition at The Harness Racing Museum & Hall of Fame, in Goshen, NY from June 1, 2015 to May 31, 2016, *The Spirit of the Horse*, one sees drawings and watercolors that Lumen Winter created in Santa Fe, New Mexico. These artworks show the strength and vitality of his oeuvre especially in his drawings. In 1939, Winter settled in Santa Fe, NM establishing a summer studio (although one newspaper article states he was regularly visiting Santa Fe as early as 1929) and he was inspired by the New Mexico Jemez Mountains and Truchas Peak located in the area. In 1965, Winter had a studio in Santa Fe on the Old Pecos Trail. He repeatedly depicted these landscapes in watercolor, drawings and oils in all seasons—thus showing an artistic evolution of the cacti, the Chemel Sage and the wild horses that predominated in these areas. Winter's artistic thinking—comparable to the French Impressionist artist Claude Monet's repetitive depiction of haystacks in all lights and seasons—is similar to his painterly evolution in showing Nature in various lights and shadows.

Winter turned to the wild horse as a subject matter in these mountains and landscapes. These wild horses represented a physicality of brute nature, an ascension to freedom and a quality of the American character—grit and perseverance—that Winter treasured. Skip Mulfalli, who was a model and assistant for Lumen Winter in some of his figures for the *Saga of the Santa Fe Trail* at the Kansas State Capital Rotunda, stated that Winter said "When I paint a Horse, I want you to smell it!"

As Winter said, when asked about his bas-relief mural of St. Paul the Apostle, NYC, why he included a bucking bronco in the mural "... My Horse is deliberately an American bucking bronco that has failed to throw its rider but instead lies itself as a symbol of the physical side of Life, exhausted in the road."

In 1965, Lumen Winter said, in a book *Artists of Santa Fe: Their Works and Words*, why he repeatedly returned to New Mexico to paint and work. He stated, "I believe...an artist must express something greater than himself— the Mountains, the Desert, the Rocks and the Trees; the Sun, the Wind, the Rain and Thunder, and Space with its Stars. The Southwest is this Great Source—unspoiled by superficial culture." He repeated these same themes over and over again in his watercolors and drawings—as if seeking the perfect expression—even in his murals. In his lifetime Lumen Winter created murals in over ten public schools in the New York metropolitan area, at the United Nations General Assembly, as well as the AFL-CIO building in Washington, DC and in the insignia for the Apollo XIII astronauts moon mission.



Four White Horses, Lithograph stone print, four colors, size 21 1/2" x 26 1/2"



Mare and Foal, Charcoal, Ink size 14" x 20"



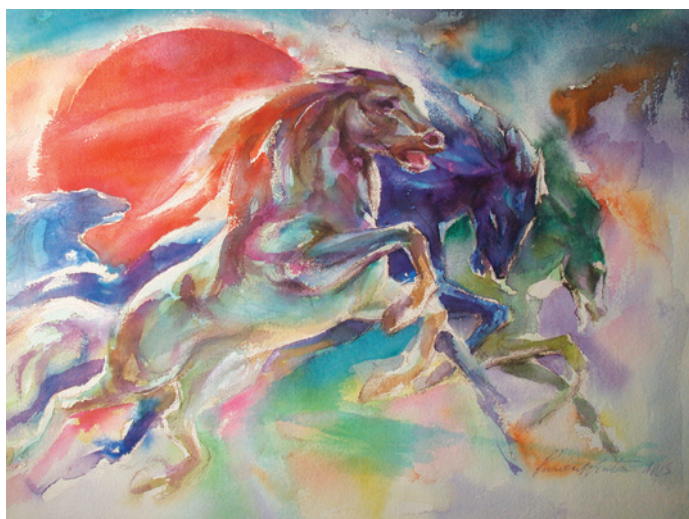
Blue Horse, watercolor, ink, size 11" x 18 1/2"



Horses and Lightning, Mural study, Watercolor, gouache, grid marks size 10¾" x 18"



First Day US Postal Cover Apollo XIII



Horses and Rainbow, mural study, pencil, size 11¾" x 18½"

Since his death in 1982, this is the first museum exhibition of Lumen Martin Winter artworks and it is highly appropriate that his first representation to the American viewing public is the wild American horse, not an Arabian or Thoroughbred, but a wild range horse in the mountains of the West.

It is my pleasure to introduce this rediscovered artist through the assistance of the fine institution of The Harness Racing Museum and Hall of Fame and I am most grateful to the museum director and her staff who made this all possible.

—Alexander W. Katlan

All images (except Apollo XIII) have been donated to the Harness Museum.

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The Mysterious Silent Paintings of Ed Brodtkin

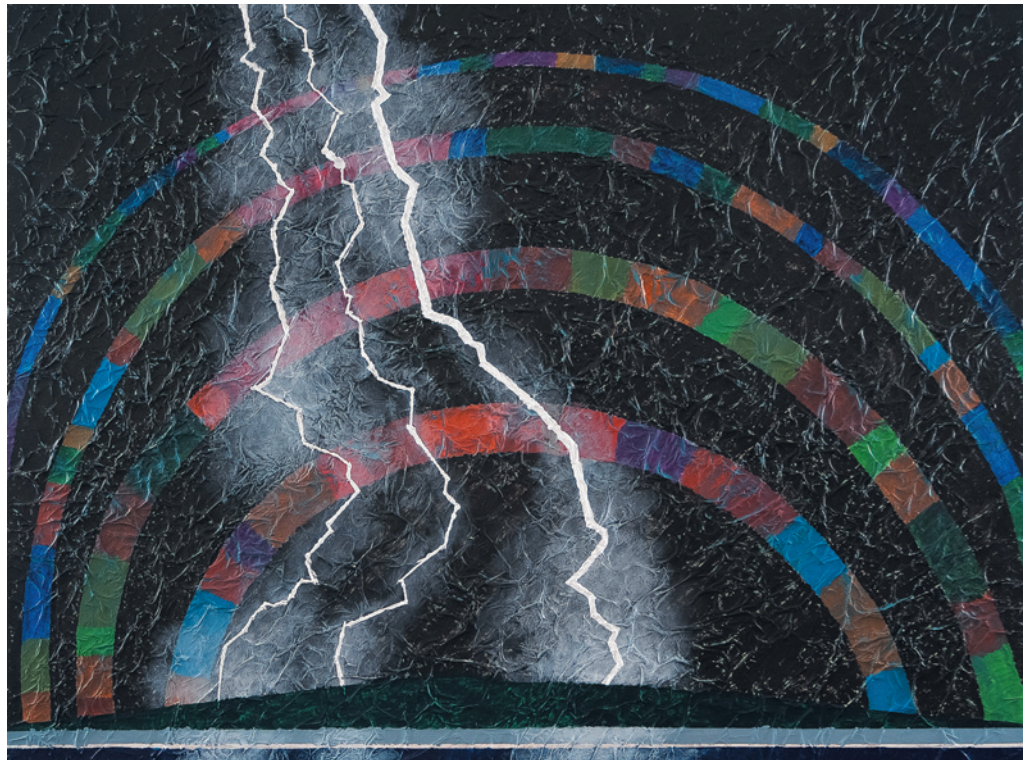
Ed Brodtkin has achieved his lifelong dream of becoming a full time fine artist. After graduating from Cooper Union, he worked as a commercial artist. Now retired from the “Mad Men” world, he devotes himself to painting—as he says “full time, every day.”

Stylistically experimental with works ranging from figurative to abstract, his paintings defy strict categorization. In fact, at a recent show at the Pleiades Gallery in Chelsea, only a mastery of tonal contrasts, a bold use of lights and darks, suggested that these various works were by the same artist.

Brodtkin’s surfaces swarm with detail, texture, and barely visible echoes of what he sees. Most of his paintings are existential contemplations. “Portals,” an acrylics, graphite, and paper collage with black velvet panels, is highly enigmatic. “We don’t know where those portals will lead or what is on the other side of my black velvet doors,” he says. “That sense of mystery is what I try to imbue in this and many of my paintings.”

Brodtkin admits that he loves to concentrate on philosophical ideas. He is a serious man, well spoken, and somewhat professorial. “My pieces have to be conceptually compelling but also aesthetically pleasing,” he says. With “Cityscape XII” the artist explores irregular shapes and three dimensionalities using cardboard, canvas, and masonite. The cardboard towers resemble a piece of Futurist sculpture with their thrusting verticals, but the intent is to make you stop and consider how the incessant construction of tall buildings will affect the future cityscape.

It is with two paintings about a thunderstorm on Greenwood Lake in Northern New Jersey that this versatile painter expresses his intense interest in nature. Both “Listen!Thunderclaps! Echoes! Over Long Pond,” acrylics on crinkled paper on a black painted canvas, and “Come the Furies Over Long Pond” capture the energy emitted by serious claps of thunder. “I used burlap on canvas as I was experimenting with materials,” says Brodtkin. Inspired by the work of Catalan painter Antoni Tàpies (1923-1988) who used everything from waste paper, string, and rags on his paintings, Brodtkin incorporates discarded materials in his work so that his surfaces have a variety of textures. A kind of alchemy takes place from this use of mixed-media, transforming what might have been a typical painting of a thunderstorm into something much more menacing and captivating. These storm



“LISTEN! Thunderclaps! Echoes! Over Long Pond”

paintings are the visual equivalent of perfect pitch. Their detailed observation is not at all complete representation, but delivers the effect of hearing, seeing, and not quite believing the power of what you are witnessing.

One painting in his recent show, “Kiki & Kelly...For as Long as Songbirds Sing,” is a tribute to two outstanding women: his wife Kiki, a well-known, accomplished artist who died five years ago, and Kelly, the daughter of a close friend, a former model and nurse, who died at an early age. The style is pure Warhol. The work consists of a series of head shots of the two women. Like Warhol’s Jackie or Marilyn series, they are posterized photographs, reproductions having only solid tones and little detail.

“Very Untitled,” is a teaser, a sort of cosmic painting that depicts dark matter with perhaps images of stars or galaxies connected to each other by thin, criss-crossing lines. “All the elements of the universe are connected visibly,” says Brodtkin who likes to work with irregular forms. He began “Very Untitled” with a rectangular piece of fiber board and then started changing its shape with a coping saw. But don’t be misled. This is not a depiction of a beautiful starry night. Instead, “it is an imagined universe,” he says, “beyond our understanding.”

Scrutiny of nature is a major theme in Brodtkin’s work. Equally important are his investigations into communication or the lack of it. Brodtkin has focused on

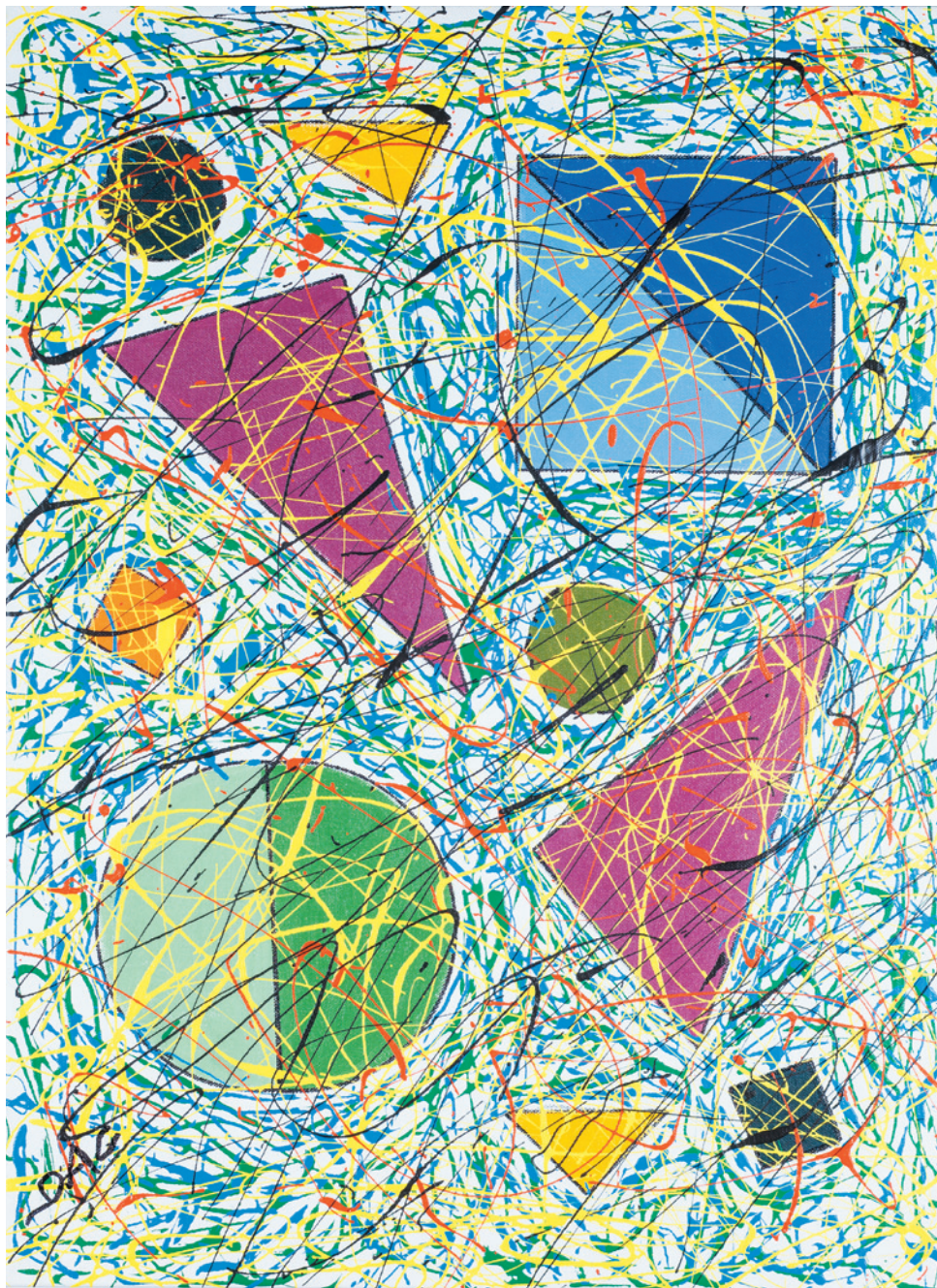
misunderstandings among peoples, cultures, and countries since he was an art student. “Discourse,” a major work in the Pleiades exhibition, incorporates letters from a medieval manuscript in 20 identical squares. “Some of the messages within the squares are connected while others are ambiguous,” he says. “In conceiving this piece I thought a lot about the challenges of miscommunications. They are as problematic today as they have been over time.”

Brodtkin does most of his work in a studio with a 12-foot window in his house in Paramus, New Jersey. He can do almost any type of work there except welding. Years ago, he found that he was allergic to turpentine so he switched from oil painting to acrylics which play a major role in his paintings.

“I have always been intrigued with man’s place in this world,” he says. “That is why I experiment, not to necessarily find answers, but to be a seeker, someone who not only wants to link colors together, but also people.” Crossing lines between figurative and abstract is another of his efforts to get away from the conventional, according to this very unconventional painter.

—Bobbie Leigh

Brodtkin’s current exhibition is at the Edward Williams Gallery of Farleigh Dickinson University in Hackensack, N.J. His work is also shown at the Pleiades Gallery, 530 W 25th St, NYC. Brodtkin Studio: 551-804-1833 edbrodtkin.newyorkartist.net.



"Beyond Star Gate"

CULPEPPER

Continued from page 5

theme. Geometric forms, such as triangles and circles are held aloft, slow-dancing against sunlight. "Red Rain" dramatically pounds the unsuspecting—a sudden downpour of lifeblood and thunder. Despite the brilliance of color, the image somehow depicts an impending darkness, an ominous note of sorts.

That fluidity of her "flow" translates into something musical about Culpepper's art. There is a rhythm, a beat, an imaginary score that emerges in the mind's eye. Not surprising. She often works while listening to music. And what

kind of music might that be? "Rock and roll," comes the unexpected response, faster than you would expect it. "Guns and Roses, Metallica. Oh, and I like jazz, too."

Montserrat's gallery director, Richard Gins, agrees: "Dorothy has her interests and stylistic preferences...over the years, she has pushed those interests into new territory in each of her shows. I always look forward to her exhibitions, because she always surprises me with something new and added. I'm sure her new show will also have surprises that redefine her work."

Get ready. Culpepper, now in her

eighth decade, looks forward. She wants to deliver "something that hasn't been seen before," she says. "I like to keep the imagination going." She is already thinking about "something new and added" for the 2016 show. Her imagination, like miracles, never ceases.

Youthfulness of spirit has no age. Culpepper is a case in point. Don't look now, but she will soon be dancing to a different drummer without losing a beat. And she will surprise us all.

Again.

—Diane Root

Showa Okamura: Intersection of Kami and Ki



"The Madonna de Strawberry"

The artist, Showa Okamura, displays lush, vibrant, mystical work in his latest exhibit at Montserrat Contemporary Arts, entitled, "Seeds," where he examines the divine mystery of the universe from which all life is created. He is a channeller of Kami and Ki—divine spirit and universal life force—through his paintings of essences. Born of the calligraphic brushwork tradition of Japanese art, he combines the iconography of Christian, Buddhist and Shinto traditions in his amalgam of imagery.

Okamura, in his artist's statement says, "I am attracted to the existence of seeds that cultivate the lives of fruits and vegetables...While staring hard at a strawberry, a cabbage, or an apple, I continue to perk up my ears at the murmuring of the seeds of life spread out in the universe...I am delighted beyond words to be able to present my works, born out of dialogues with such seed-bearing things, and to the contemporary art lovers of New York." His work can be seen at Montserrat from June 3rd through 20th where his natural images of seeds of fruits and trees become symbols of divine creation.

Divine creation is primary in his painting, "The Seed de Apple" unifying human anatomical parts of all seeing eyes and the female sexual organs with Eve's mythological, primordial apple. His apple is a depiction of divine



"The Cabbage Man"

knowledge which contains both light and dark emanations, a symbol of good and evil. This is underscored by his superimposition of the light colored fruit on a black background. Could it be that Okamura is commenting on the overwhelming life force as being totally beyond human sensibility and also saying that this supernatural force can be the embodiment of peace?

In "The Venus de Melon," the fruit's ripe fecundity transforms into an earth mother symbol of Eros and female creative, sexual energy. The painter draws attention to the figure's pubic area by repeating the color and pattern of the melon's skin as if, just as the melon rind holds the delicious fruit within, this Venus promises the delightful energies of love. Hands reach out in a mandala around the figure, as if they were mudras of divine protection and knowledge, spreading throughout the universe. Clearly, this fruit holds the mysterious procreative power of the female element of the life force in which the major compositional anchor of the painting is the circular melon form where the artist may also be alluding to divine unity and wholeness.

Okamura also depicts the feminine element in the painting, "The Madonna de Strawberry." A strawberry can be an image of love and in this case, that love is divine. The inside of the fruit radiates out from the central figures of Madonna

and Child in a protective red womb. The strawberry's leaves almost configure a lotus where the mother and child rise out primordially from a green leafy base. The outer layer of the strawberry becomes detailed with all seeing eyes, perhaps the eyes of God, and the Madonna's dark hair is sanctified by a simple linear halo, contrasting with the line work in the mandala. In this seed of love, we find an Earth Mother who becomes almost a Bosatsu with her protective hands cradling her precious divine child.

The miracle of the passing of the seasons is portrayed in the painting, "The Leaf de Four Seasons" where change comes from an astronomical, divine force. The cosmic passage of time based on the earth's rotation and revolution around the life giving sun is a force beyond human understanding. How did it all happen?—one may ask. The answer is deep within the mystery of creation beyond our reach.

Okamura's linework in this painting is detailed, delicate and subdued in the drawing of the maple leaf's veins. The leaf floats in the canvas space with seasonal colors on a mottled, atmospheric ground. The artist splashes pale color on the form to make the leaf's surface almost palpable and he allows another pale leaf to grow from the stem, signifying the subtle immutability of seasonal change.

His three paintings, "The Cabbage



"The Seed de Apple"

Man," "The Piment de Wrath," and "Eye de Tree," to me, all pay homage to Kami. Traditionally, Shintoism is nature worship where humans give thanks to the spirits for an auspicious relationship. Okamura brings Kami to consciousness by imbuing the natural forms in these works with human sensibilities.

The human characteristic of fear rises from the ghostly form emerging from the textured core of the cabbage in "The Cabbage Man." This man is here to surprise and shock. His expression bears some resemblance to the faces of Jōmon figures. All the energy of the painting coalesces in the form's eyes, mouth and upward jutting arms. In western art, this figure reminds me of the terrified subject in Edvard Munch's "The Scream." The painting's blacks, purples, pinks and blues burst forth from around the figure in vigorous but disciplined brushstrokes, emphasizing raw, primal power. It is a spirit to respect for it can bring destruction.

"The Piment de Wrath" turns a fiery red pepper into a menacing depiction of an enraged face, reminiscent of demonic Japanese masks. The pepper seeds are transformed into a snarling countenance with bulging eyes and a mouth of large, piercing white teeth where the form seems to be saying, "beware of my tremendous, overwhelming power, for I too can be a destroying god."

"The Eye de Tree" is much more tranquil than these two other pieces with subtle coloration and detailed linework representative of the gnarled,



"The Leaf de Four Seasons"

splintery surface of the tree bark. Spirit is infused into the surface where Okamura brings forth a face from the bark's natural lines. The painting is primarily monochromatic except for the startling elements of a blue eye in one of the tree knots along with an elliptical knot intimating a mouth registering surprise. The preponderance of the strong right eye makes me think of the Shinto myth where the moon god was born from the right eye of the Kami Izanagi. Perhaps here too, the artist alludes to cosmic creativity.

In both "The Eye de Tree" and "The Cabbage Man", I am reminded of Hokusai's monk, Mongaku beneath the Nachi Waterfall, atoning for his sins. In Hokusai's woodblock, the monk's face seems to grow out of the falling water, just as in these two paintings, the faces grow from the natural vegetal forms.

In all these paintings, Okamura's sense of space is flattened, with compositions drawn on vertical axes down the centers of the paintings. Having a history of strong portrayals of hands in his artwork, the imagery of the hand again plays a primary role in these pieces. Here, hands are raised almost in supplication and are also used as symbols of protection and caring. These compositional elements bring transcendence to the work, as in the energy of paintings by Christian mystics or in the meanings of hand positions in Buddhism. The artist is not constrained by the canvases' physical boundaries as the works cross spatially into the divine, creative realms of various



"The Piment de Wrath"

spiritual disciplines, going beyond human gender into timelessness, all growing from nature's tiny, inscrutable seeds.

—Anne Rudder

Showa Okamura
Monserrat Conetemporary Art Gallery
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Showcasing Five Artists at New Century Artists Gallery

Bold in scope and invention, ART•5!, a brilliantly diverse show at New Century Artists Gallery, offers that rare chance to see the work of five artists all of whom deliver an aesthetic wollop. As curator and artist Basha Maryanska says: "Each of the artists in this show follows his or her own vision. They have searched and experimented to arrive at what is truly all their own, not what others do." Each demonstrates not just an intense personal vision, but courage, perseverance, and the self-confidence to pursue highly individual work.

John Lechner is a fine art photographer who lives in Hunter Valley about two hours north of Sydney in New South Wales, Australia. His work reflects a deep reverence for nature and the mastery of what he calls "the magic moment," the perfect angle of the sun, the beams of light on sedimentary rock, the mist slowly rising from a cold sea into warm air. The tonal qualities in his "Golden Morning" fine art print are totally devoid of manipulation. Relying on his own eye, every perceived fluctuation of light and shade, and his knowledge of composition, Lechner has created a portrait of sunrise just as it greets the rural farmland where he lives.

Nature is a recurring theme in Lechner's photographs, all previously unseen in this country. He celebrates dramatic landscapes—waterfalls, a black gumtree split by lightning, sandstone rock formations—scenes of an Eden untouched by human hands. If there is an underlying message in these painterly works, it is that the pristine places of this world need to be not only enjoyed but also preserved.

Anna Pietruszka's four oil on canvas paintings are reflections of all that one sees, feels, and experiences at a given time. "Since 1995 my work has emanated from my fascination with textures and colors," she explains adding that it is up to the viewer to interpret and find meaning in her vivid, dynamic works. Like color field artists, her paintings are characterized by amorphous forms. Her colors are deep and rich containing astounding harmonies. To enhance the viewer's reaction, she will use fingers rather than brushes to create the textures she seeks. Pietruszka, who works both in her native Poland and London, titles her paintings "City Puzzles," as cities are the catalyst for the paintings in this show, although there are no obvious allusions to specific subject matter. Her concern is to convey the unbound energy and rhythm of cities. Yet in spite of her insistence on abstraction, in one painting you can almost feel the fog and soft rain of London in the spring.

Roman Choinka paints his memories. His subjects come to him in dreams and he often dates his paintings with the time of his dreams, rather than the date he painted

them. He is interested in when ideas first come to him, as in the title, "November 9th, 1989," painted last year. Choinka's semi-abstract work, as well as his titles—"Sounds and places never forgotten," or "Each change is lasting,"—for example, are deeply poetic.

In writing about his work, Choinka says that his childhood had a big influence on what he does which is why dreams play such an important role in his visual language. "The world economic and social crisis causes reality to seem dim, gray, and colorless. That makes me more eager to paint with vigorous tones as an antidote to this situation," he says.

Perhaps that is why the semi-abstract landscapes in this show are so optimistic. The bluest of blue skies is one of his main themes. Sometimes his sun is a blinding yellow while other colors interlock in vivid contrasts. In a few works, there are hints of elongated figures, but primarily as Choinka says: "I want to tell about my experiences that are nonverbal. Not about me, but about the world, people, their conditions, situations, their slavery and freedom—after all, art stimulates contemplation of the world, brings out emotion and thought." Choinka in this show displays a sensuous and expressive handling of composition, paint, and line. He also gives us a sense of an artist's ways of interior and exterior seeing that perhaps only comes in dreams. This is the first of what should be many exhibitions of his work in the U.S.

Kathryn Hart, an abstract painter and sculptor, is an international award-winning, extremely prolific artist, based in Colorado. Hers are works to be studied, not simply glimpsed, as they are imbued with meanings that only become apparent after considerable thought. Consider "Eighteen Inches," a mixed-media burlap and found objects work, seeded with quirks of meaning. The burlap has been tugged, frayed, pulled and stretched recalling the scene from "Gone With the Wind" when Mammy reduces Scarlett O'Hara's waist to 18 inches. The struggle, then and now, the artist seems to be saying, is to be one's own person and not what we are supposed to be for other people.

In "Unearthly Misfit," a mixed media, burlap, and found object construction, the artist's palette is also subdued, though here black is the primary color. This intriguing work evokes the feelings of alienation characteristic of someone who never belongs, an outsider, always on the periphery looking in. The canvas is gashed at the bottom, and partially stitched together leaving an irregular empty space at one end. "I work on them—stitching—until they breathe on their own," she says.

Hart is clearly someone who has a

profound interest in spiders and their webs. The stitching motif appears in much of her work, partially because of her heritage as the daughter of a plastic surgeon whom she often observed in his operating theater. Another possibility is that webs are not what they seem—fragile and gauzy. In fact, in her interpretations, they are three-dimensional, displaying a huge range of web architecture, elasticity, and strength. Whether in a piece entitled "Relentless Passage" which hangs away from the wall casting an eerie shadow or "Pilar," Hart's works are deeply mystical constructions revealing inner truths about herself and women's place in the wider world.

Basha Maryanska, a featured painter in this show and also its curator, works as well as teaches in her studio in Beacon, New York. "My painting comes from my interpretation of the Hudson River School" says Maryanska whose aesthetic vision is shaped by the beauty and grandeur of the Hudson River Valley. "In my art I work on motifs from the nature of this region, transforming what comes from my subconscious mind into abstract images," she says.

Maryanska studied in Warsaw and Gdansk, Poland, where she obtained her MFA, followed by a scholarship at the Ecole du Louvre in Paris. A recipient of many awards and honors, Maryanska has shown her work around the world. But she has another important role—helping artists get their work better known through the international residency programs she organizes.

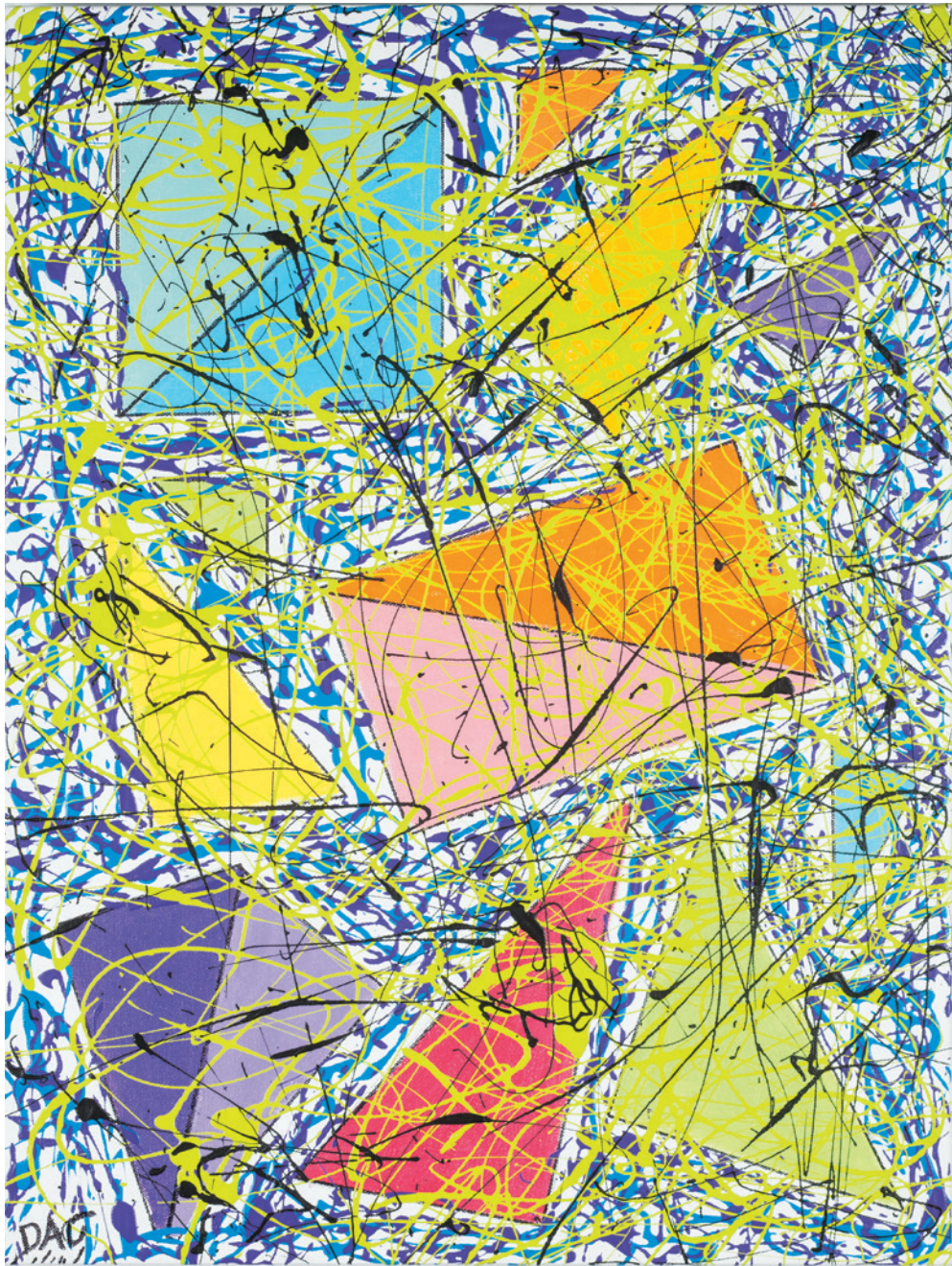
Working with acrylics on canvas, Maryanska's paintings may be semi-abstract, but her titles are explicit—"Rainy West Side Drive" or "City Dreams." There's no escaping how the city appears to her artist's vision, an agglomeration of impressions or a stream of brash, bright images that are her personal reaction to what she sees. There is always a level of detail in her work that separates it from the purely conceptual. "Red City," a palette of brilliant reds is so fully saturated with color that at first glance it looks like a tapestry and only on further study, does it convey the speed and vitality of the modern American metropolis. Using the city as a major iconographic element for the paintings in this show, Maryanska produces compelling images distinguished by forceful, gestural paint surfaces. Her preoccupation is with sharp angles, movement, and a strong sense of archetypal imagery.

—Bobbie Leigh

ART•5! is on view until June 27, 2015
at New Century Artists Gallery,
530 West 26th St. New York, N.Y.
212-367-7072

Dorothy A. Culpepper

Fractals



"Purple Kite Down"

July 15 - August 22, 2015

Reception: Thursday, July 16, 6 - 8 pm



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