

Color Inspirations

The energy of color is life's energy. Painting with color is a joyful act of living for Sharon Doran Callagy. In her paintings there is a ravishment of color where a whole language is conveyed through visceral color relationships. Whether the work is representational or abstract - and Sharon's work branches into several directions with dexterity - she activates the canvases with bold pigments and composition. The viewer gets a sense of the artist's personality through this exuberance of color play and begins to pick up certain brushstrokes and movements repeating in paintings: revealing the patterns of life and the hand of the artist. Each of these recent paintings is intimate in scale and fluid in motion, offering to the viewer the artist's own enjoyment of life.

Each time Sharon begins to paint it's an isolated and pure moment. Without premeditation she spontaneously begins to work the canvas, using acrylics from the tube or mixed by the artist, until the painting begins to develop and offers its own inspiration as to how it will be developed. It is in these silent moments of dialogue with the painting: with mind and hand responding together to color and form, that the painting's identity is decided. Most of these works fall into three main categories:

The representational works are mostly landscapes of places Sharon has visited or lived, like Hawaii. Nature and city are depicted in various techniques from flurries of rapid paint strokes to more smooth and measured applications of flat color built up into patterns. In every case she streamlines the forms to the bare essentials that convey a place or moment.

The expressionist works are full of buried allusions, with titles referencing places and occasions. On these canvases the artist lets loose and treats the entire canvas to dollops, smears and whisks of color. In these paintings viewers are invited to appreciate the sheer materiality of painting through the artist's gesture.

The "shape paintings" are in direct contrast to the expressionist work. Having more in common with Matisse's cut-outs than Hodgkin's abstractions; these paintings reveal Sharon's Scandinavian compulsion for clean lines, geometry, and discipline. Almost in spite of the careful and deliberate work, the effect is still in keeping with the boisterous joie de vive that carries through all of Sharon's paintings.

Written by Karisa Senavitis: Director of Washington Printmaker Gallery and co-founder of the graphic design studio, Will Work For Good.