



Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

2010

Colorful Musings

Kerin McBride
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>

© The Author

Downloaded from

<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/2292>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.

Colorful Musings

Documentation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Interdisciplinary Studies In Interdisciplinary Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

Kerin McBride

Bachelor of Arts, Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, Virginia, 2003

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
December, 2010

Table of Contents

Artist Statement	iii
Introduction.....	1
My Aesthetics	2
Focus on the Landscape	3
Fantasy Series	4
Red Tree Series	4
Integration of Paintings into 3D Sculptures.....	5
Conclusion	7
Bibliography	8
Appendix.....	9
List of Figures	9
Figures.....	10
Resume.....	23

Artist Statement

I explore the use of color and texture to create mood and drama. I typically focus on landscape images, in which I can convey a sense of whimsy, mystery, community, or solitude. I use non-naturalistic colors and stylize the objects in my paintings but they are still identifiable as landscapes. My color choices, combined with the abstracted landscapes, urges the viewer to look at the world around them in new ways.

I use a variety of materials to create my work including oil, acrylics, art papers, fabrics, miscellaneous fibers, and found objects. The tools I use include brushes, painting knives, plastic bags, cloth, and my fingers. Using a variety of materials and tools allows me to create complex texture and a sense of depth in my paintings. My goal is to give the viewer a lift or energy boost. I want the experience to be positive for the viewer and cause them to be curious and want to keep looking.

Colorful Musings

Introduction

Art supplies have always excited me, from new crayons to Play Doh to paint. Much of these were rationed to me when I was younger and, naturally, that only increased my desire for them. I've had a life-long love affair with colors and textures and want to feast on them. I imagined eating paint that looks like icing, needing to touch and squeeze clay, wanting to submerge my hands in a giant bucket of paint. I'm not afraid to get messy, have paint on my clothes, or let paint drop on the floor. It's pure freedom.

Not having taken art classes in middle or high school, it wasn't until my mid-twenties that I would have even so much as a crayon in my hand again. I felt starved of being able to play with art and jealously watched others create and express. I desperately wanted to be able to create something beautiful that would satisfy me and bring pleasure to others in the process. However, I had convinced myself that I wasn't good at art and could only draw stick figures. There are those who seem to have natural talent or even the unattainable ability to render work effortlessly and embark on original ideas. I didn't see myself in this category but the desire to be so was strong.

I enrolled in art classes which eventually turned into a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. After completing my bachelor's degree, I was somewhat dissatisfied with my knowledge and abilities. Therefore, I began searching for a way to further my training which led me to enroll in the Virginia Commonwealth University's Master of Interdisciplinary Studies in Interdisciplinary Arts program (MIS-IAR).

My Aesthetics

Throughout my artistic pursuits, I've been fascinated with color theories and how placing different combinations of hues together can achieve so many different effects. However, I was somewhat intimidated to begin a painting because I didn't quite know where to start or how to determine a palette of colors. To overcome my inhibitions, I began experimenting with a contemporary color wheel and studying optical color, or the ways our eyes interpret color information when light waves hit an object. Joseph Albers (1888-1976), well-known painter and color theorist, believed that color is constantly changing and that it is always being seen in relation to the colors it is surrounded by. To deepen my understanding of the way color works, I began a series of exercises that were designed to heighten my awareness of which colors to choose when, why, and how. To do this, I began painting basic grey value scales and matching different hues to the scales using tints and shades. This process helped me understand the value, intensity, and temperature of hues. Next, I began a series of small paintings in which I limited my palette in each painting to either primary colors, secondary colors, tertiary colors, triad colors, analogous colors, colors that scintillate, high value colors, or low value colors. Through my experiments, I began to train my eyes to see the differences between colors and how they interact with one another through comparison and contrast and to apply this knowledge to my own color usage. My goal was to find a way to express myself through subjective color choices that reflect my aesthetic ideas. I found this process to be invaluable to my understanding of how colors interact with one another and it enabled me to paint more freely.

In addition to a better understanding of how colors interact, I also learned that color can be used to affect or influence others in many ways. Color psychology can be used to sway thinking, cause reactions, and influence the selling of products. Many businesses design

workplaces with colors that are designed to keep the mood of their employees happy, as well as their customers. Also, by the use of effective color contrast, color can be used to design living spaces for people with partial sight and color deficiencies. In addition, color therapy is an alternative medical method which uses color and light to balance a person's physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental ailments. Through my research and experiments, I've come to realize the importance of color in society and how it plays on our psyche.

Focus on the Landscape

Aside from interest in color, I've also had a love affair with the landscape because of the many ways that landscapes can be interpreted. It seems that there is an endless variety of ways that I can portray a landscape, including whimsical, spooky, mysterious, restful, or vivacious. In years past, I traveled frequently to Jackson Hole, Wyoming and Yellowstone National Park and became fascinated with the white birch or aspen trees that grow there. I painted a series of these trees using local colors, or the inherent hues of the trees. However, with my newfound knowledge of color theory, I wanted to push myself to try a new version of the birch trees. My first attempt at rendering a painting using non-naturalistic bold colors in a landscape was *After the Fire* (Appendix, 1). In this painting, I decided that the background should be dark and mysterious while keeping the trees light and cheerful. I rendered the trees with thick paint, using a painting knife because I wanted to keep the feel of the trees loose and sketchy. I named this painting *After the Fire* because while touring Yellowstone National Park, a few years after the 1988 fire which devastated much of the park, amongst the black burned trees were bright thin little trees growing anew. It was so uplifting to see hope for a new beginning amidst such

destruction. I remembered how I felt seeing this new growth and tried to incorporate this feeling into my painting through a particular combination of colors.

Fantasy Series

From this point, I began a series that I entitled *Fantasy*. While staying with the theme of using non-naturalistic colors to render the birch trees, I began stylizing the trees with tighter lines and including multiple colors and dabs of thick oil paint using a painting knife. I also incorporated the use of color scintillation, which involves compounding color contrasts causing an optical illusion of visual effects as in *Fantasy I* (Appendix, 2). Also in this series, I experimented with keeping the same composition but used different media. Since using different media can have different effects, I wanted to see if and how the mood would change between the pieces. In *Fantasy II* (Appendix, 3) I used acrylic whereas the prior piece was oil. The paint I used had a flat, velvety quality to it and my technique was to minimize brush strokes. The overall effect was a softer version of *Fantasy I*. *Fantasy III* (Appendix, 4) is a mixed media piece with texture, in which I combined acrylic paint, art papers, fibers, and oil. The different media served to add texture and depth, giving the piece a three-dimensional effect.

Red Tree Series

In keeping with the landscape theme, I turned my attention to a series of red trees. The first painting that started this series was a basic landscape of mountains, sky, and ground using non-naturalistic colors that included a long row of round red trees. I named this painting *Lollipop Trees* (Appendix, 5) because I wanted to keep the tree line whimsical, and the trees reminded me of lollipops with their rounded tree shapes on "stick" trunks. I painted this with

thick oil using a painting knife. I wanted to experiment with cropping this same landscape and came up with the idea to crop a section of the red trees and enlarge them to cover the entire canvas. The result was an abstracted rendering of the red trees entitled *Red Abstract Lollies* (Appendix, 6). I painted this using oil with a brush. I rounded the tree shapes and anthropomorphized the tree trunks to make them look as if the trees were walking together somewhere. I intended this painting to have a sense of whimsy combined with a slightly creepy or unsettling feeling. In *Long Red Trees w/ Texture* (Appendix, 7), I again cropped the long row of red trees in *Lollipop Trees* and enlarged them to fill most of the canvas. I excluded all background scenery except the ground the trees stand on and created a feeling of atmosphere around the tree tops. I isolated the trees to be the only image on the canvas and added texture to these trees by building up a layer of molding paste and carving shapes into the paste (Appendix, 8). Once the paste was dry, I sealed it with a matte medium and finally painted overtop this with thick oil. I was satisfied with the texture I created because it gave the landscape a three-dimensional effect and have been using this technique ever since.

Integration of Paintings into 3D Sculptures

When I first enrolled in the MIS-IAR program, I had never attempted making a sculpture. I had been wanting to experiment with sculpture for a number of years because I had a theory that working in three-dimensional and in two-dimensional media at the same time would help me better understand space, form, and design. I have found that working on a sculpture opens up my imagination in an entirely different way than when working on a painting, and the two disciplines together only serve to enrich my understanding of the whole process of creating art.

I began formulating a plan to make three-dimensional sculptures of some of my paintings. I made a large sculpture of the colorful birch trees from my *Fantasy Series* of paintings entitled *Fantasy 3D* (Appendix, 9). This sculpture was quite a challenge because I was attempting to create a vertical sculpture that was tall and thin but needed to be sturdy. I researched and sought advice in order to come up with a plan to achieve this goal. Throughout the making of this sculpture I made quite a few mistakes, which served to help me improve my methods. In the end, I made a base of resin and polyurethane to look as if the trees were standing in water. Then, I formed the trees out of thick copper wire and epoxy clay. The copper wire served as a support for the tall, thin trees and I embedded the bottom of the tree trunks in the resin base. I coated the copper wire with epoxy clay, which hardens to a rigid surface. Once the epoxy clay was dry, I painted the tree trunks in vibrant colors to mirror the *Fantasy Series*.

The next sculpture I rendered was also in keeping with the *Fantasy series* theme. This time, I incorporated an abstract figure in the middle of the trees entitled *Fantasy 3D w/ Figure* (Appendix, 10). The figure represents a child standing in the middle of the trees and looking out of the forest. While *Fantasy 3D* is sturdy, I searched for materials that would make this new sculpture even sturdier. This time, I used a cement base and rebar for the trees supports. I then covered the rebar in epoxy clay. The figure is on a rebar support, carved out of foam, and then coated in epoxy clay. I decided to paint the trees black but keep the figure painted in colorful abstract shapes to create a contrast between the figure and the surrounding trees. The decision to paint the figure in the colorful abstract shapes was to have the sculpture relate to two different paintings, allowing me to further merge aspects expressed in my paintings and sculptures. The trees are intended to represent the *Fantasy Series* theme and the surface treatment of the colorful figure is designed to relate to one of my abstract paintings entitled *Fun* (Appendix, 11).

Having created the child figure in *Fantasy 3D w/ Figure*, I wanted to continue my exploration of the figure and decided to make a figure of a tall, nude woman with a vase in place of a head called *She Vase* (Appendix, 12). As I continued to make these sculptures, they became increasingly more sturdy. *She Vase* has a granite base and plumbers pipe for support. I carved her in foam and then coated her with epoxy clay. In keeping with my intention to have my paintings and sculptures relate, I painted *She Vase* in vibrant geometric shapes that mirror one of my abstract paintings entitled *Green/Black Abstract* (Appendix, 13).

By employing non-naturalistic colors and texture combined with stylized objects in my paintings and sculptures, I urge viewers to look at the world around them in new ways. I have many ideas to continue relating my paintings and sculptures and am excited to begin each day creating more works of art.

Conclusion

The MIS-IAR program helped to give my work focus and direction. I learned new points of view and techniques. I was forced to solve problems and search for solutions. Throughout the program, my work has matured and developed a professional quality. What started as a need to be immersed in thick paint and color, for the pure sensory and tactical satisfaction, evolved into a deeper need to push and explore the way colors interact, to combine color with rich textures, and to translate paintings into three-dimensional form. When I'm successful in this venture, I can say "I did that!" It's a high for me and, hopefully, others.

Bibliography

- Albers, Josef. *Interaction of Color: New Complete Edition*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Atkinson, Jennifer L. *Collage Art: A Step-By-Step Guide & Showcase*. Gloucester, MA: Quarry Books, 1996.
- Bothwell, Dorr, and Marlys Mayfield. *NOTAN: The Dark-Light Principle of Design*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1968.
- Brown, John. *Character Sculpting*. DVD. Directed by Eric Miller, 2004. Los Angeles, CA: Gnomon Workshop, 2004.
- Faraut, Philippe. *Mastering Portraiture - Advanced Analysis of the Face Sculpted in Clay*. Honeoye, New York: PCF Studios, Inc., 2009.
- Feldman, Edmund Burke. *Varieties of Visual Experience*. 4th ed. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992.
- Greenberg, Jan, and Sandra Jordan. *Chuck Close Up Close*. New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc., 1998.
- Hale, Nathan Cabot. *Creating Welded Sculpture*. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1994.
- Messer, Thomas M. *Kandinsky*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1997.
- Powel, William F. *Color and How to Use it*. Tustin, CA: Walter Foster Publishing, 1984.
- Spring, Justin. *Wolf Kahn*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996.
- Whitfield, Sarah, and John Elderfield. *Bonnard*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1998.
- Zelanski, Paul J. *Color*. 5th ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Publishers, 2006.

Appendix

List of Figures

- Figure 1. *After the Fire*, oil on canvas, 36"x48", 2008.
- Figure 2. *Fantasy I*, oil on canvas, 24"x24", 2008.
- Figure 3. *Fantasy II*, acrylic on canvas, 36"x36", 2008.
- Figure 4. *Fantasy III*, mixed media on canvas, 48"x48", 2008.
- Figure 5. *Lollipop Trees*, oil on canvas, 24"x48", 2008.
- Figure 6. *Red Abstract Lollies*, oil on canvas, 24"x30", 2008.
- Figure 7. *Long Red Trees w/ Texture*, oil on canvas, 20"x60", 2008.
- Figure 8. *Long Red Trees w/ Texture (detail)*, oil on canvas, 20"x60", 2008.
- Figure 9. *Fantasy 3D*, mixed media, 67"x33"x33", 2009.
- Figure 10. *Fantasy 3D w/ Figure*, mixed media, 68"x16"x13", 2010.
- Figure 11. *Fun*, acrylic on canvas, 48"x48", 2009.
- Figure 12. *She Vase*, mixed media, 64"x8"x10", 2010.
- Figure 13. *Green/Black Abstract*, acrylic on canvas, 48"x48", 2009.



Figure 1. *After the Fire*, oil on canvas, 36"x48", 2008.



Figure 2. *Fantasy I*, oil on canvas, 24"x24", 2008.



Figure 3. *Fantasy II*, acrylic on canvas, 36"x36", 2008.



Figure 4. *Fantasy III*, mixed media on canvas, 48"x48", 2008.



Figure 5. *Lollipop Trees*, oil on canvas, 24"x48", 2008.



Figure 6. *Red Abstract Lollies*, oil on canvas, 24"x30", 2008.



Figure 7. *Long Red Trees w/ Texture*, oil on canvas, 20"x60", 2008.



Figure 8. *Long Red Trees w/ Texture (detail)*, oil on canvas, 20"x60", 2008.



Figure 9. *Fantasy 3D*, mixed media, 67"x33"x33", 2009.



Figure 10. *Fantasy 3D w/ Figure*, mixed media, 68"x16"x13", 2010.



Figure 11. *Fun*, acrylic on canvas, 48"x48", 2009.



Figure 12. *She Vase*, mixed media, 64"x8"x10", 2010.



Figure 13. *Green/Black Abstract*, acrylic on canvas, 48"x48", 2009.

Kerin McBride

EDUCATION:

- 2010 Master of Interdisciplinary Studies in Interdisciplinary Arts, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia.
Emphasis in Painting and Sculpture.
- 2003 Bachelor of Arts, Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, Virginia.
Emphasis in Painting.
- 1999 Certificate in Painting and Drawing, Corcoran School of Art, Washington, D.C.

WORK EXPERIENCE:

- 2009 - Present Workshop Instructor, Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton, Virginia.
- 2008 - Present Juried Studio Member, Instructor, Special Events Representative, Hanging Representative, Workhouse Arts Center, Lorton, Virginia.
- 2008 - Present VIA (Very Important Artist) Program, Jerry's Artarama, Raleigh, North Carolina.
- 2003 - Present Owner, Kerin Fine Arts, McLean, Virginia. Includes operating small business and participating in national juried fine art festivals.
- 2009 Instructor, Instructional Videos, Jerry's Artarama, Raleigh, North Carolina.
- 2009 Artist in Residence, Featherstone Elementary School, Prince William County Public Schools, Woodbridge, Virginia.

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS:

- 2008 - Present *Continuous Exhibition.* Workhouse Arts Center. Lorton, Virginia.
- 2010 *Colorful Musings*, Master of Interdisciplinary Studies in Interdisciplinary Arts Thesis Exhibition, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, Virginia. Workhouse Arts Center, Building #10 Gallery, Lorton, Virginia.
- 2010 *Workhouse Arts Center, Featured Artist.* Workhouse Arts Center, Building #10 Gallery. Lorton, Virginia.
- 2010 *Group Show.* Jo Ann Rose Gallery. Reston, Virginia.
- 2010 Reston Chamber of Commerce. Reston, Virginia.
- 2009 *Instructor/Student Exhibit.* Workhouse Arts Center. Lorton, Virginia.
- 2009 *Small Works Exhibit.* Workhouse Arts Center. Lorton, Virginia.
- 2008 *Artomatic 2008.* Washington, D.C.
- 2008 *Traveling Exhibition.* University of Phoenix, Reston, Virginia.
- 2008 *Annual Gala.* National Network for Children and Families. Bethesda, Maryland.
- 2008 *Subjective Realities.* Agora Gallery, Chelsea, New York.
- 2007 *Group Exhibition.* Amdur Gallery, Glenview, Illinois.
- 2006 *The Substance of Color.* Agora Gallery, Chelsea, New York.
- 2004 *Annual Gala.* Washington Performing Arts Society. Washington, D.C.
- 2002 *Student Exhibition.* Hunt Hall Art Gallery, Mary Baldwin College, Staunton, Virginia.

AWARDS:

- 2009 *MAD Artist Award (Merger of Art and Design)*. Association of Interior Design Professionals (AIDP). Lorton, Virginia.
- 2008 *Merit Award - Port Clinton Art Festival*. Amdur Productions. Highland Park, Illinois.
- 2007 *Poster Contest Winner - Buffalo Grove Art Festival*. Amdur Productions. Buffalo Grove, Illinois.
- 2002 *Prizewinner for Student Exhibition*. Student Fine Arts Association. Mary Baldwin College. Staunton, Virginia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- McBride, Kerin. *Acrylic Painting: Stunning Abstract Landscapes*. DVD. Directed by Michael Goldstein 2009. Raleigh, North Carolina: Burning Oak Studios, 2009.
- McBride, Kerin. "Fantasy." In *American Art Collector - Juried Compilation of New York*, edited by Tom Palmer, 137. Berkeley, California: Alcove Books, 2009, Jurors: Howard Eige, Jan Christensen Heller.
- McBride, Kerin. In *2009 Art Annual: Amdur Productions*, edited by Hennessy Design Group, 28 and 76. Highland Park, Illinois: Amdur Productions, Inc., 2009.
- Rader, Jane. "Meet Kerin McBride of McLean." *Java Town*, February, 2009, Volume 5, Number 6.
- McBride, Kerin. In *2008 Art Annual: Amdur Productions*, edited by Mike Pfeifer, 28 and 76. Highland Park, Illinois: Amdur Productions, Inc., 2008.
- McBride, Kerin. In *2007 Art Annual: Amdur Productions*, edited by Mike Pfeifer, 75. Highland Park, Illinois: Amdur Productions, Inc., 2007.
- McBride, Kerin. In *Washington Project for the Arts Artist Directory*, directed by Kim Ward, 313. Washington, D.C.: Washington Project for the Arts, 2008.
- Speer, Camela. "Get to Know the Workhouse Studio Artists." *Workhouse Insider*, July 2009, Volume IV, Issue 3, p. 12.
- Swift, Matthew. "Something Uplifting: McLean Artist Prepares for New York Show." *The McLean Connection Newspapers* (April 17, 2008). <http://www.connectionnewspapers.com/article.asp?article=313406&paper=68&cat=226> (accessed July 21, 2010).

WORKS LOCATED ONLINE:

- "Kerin McBride." Personal Website, <http://www.kerinfinearts.com/>
- Art.com. "Kerin McBride." Kerin McBride Posters and Prints at Art.com. http://www.art.com/asp/search_do.asp/_/posters.htm?ui=4D84594D5AC74BC2AD0FFE3E7C67D972
- Artist Rising.com. "Kerin McBride." Original Artwork and High-Quality Prints by Living Artists. <http://www.artistrising.com/shop/search/N/0/Ntk/all/Ntt/Kerin+McBride/Num/1/>

REPRESENTATION:

- 2008 - Present Workhouse Arts Center. Lorton, Virginia.