

Brenda Hope Zappitell's Work

Modern Abstract Expressionism as it Evolves and Flourishes

Story by Libby Allen

Photos courtesy of Gallery Orange

In the 20th Century, artists such as Joan Mitchell, Jackson Pollock, Hans Hoffman, and many others developed Abstract Expressionism into a major movement. Today Abstract Expressionism has developed into a modern genre within the artistic community, while remaining a concentrated and thought-provoking artistic concept.

Brenda Hope Zappitell's work exemplifies contemporary Abstract Expressionism. Brenda's works are displayed in many prestigious private collections around the country, as well as the MD Anderson Cancer Centre in Houston, and the University of North Texas Business Leadership Building. And, of course, Zappitell's works display right here in the Crescent City, at Gallery Orange on Royal Street.

Zappitell considers herself an emerging artist and an abstract expressionist painter. Her technique is self-described as work that is developed through intuition but with intention and no representation whatsoever. In other words, pure emotion is the driving force behind Zappitell's paintings.

"I started this journey of pursuing Abstract Expressionism because I wanted to avoid any crutches in my work. When I was doing figurative work I felt too confined," Zappitell said. "My idea was to be completely original, and to incorporate themes of serendipity - of nature and color- throughout my work."

Zappitell's works involve 10 to 12 layers of paint, with the first layers visible on the finished product. Every painting starts out with 3 different colors - mainly black, and then primaries that mix the rest of the colors together, producing a fascinating cohesive quality.

"As an Abstract Expressionist painter my only tools are *color, movement, and mark-making*. Every color reacts with another and continues into a fluid movement; my goal is to make my imagination and the panel meet each other," Zappitell explained. "My paintings emerge from the emotion I feel in the moment my brush touches



↑ *Another Door Opens I*
2011
Acrylic with Cold Wax On Panel
60" x 60"

→ *A Matter Of Perception I*
2012
Acrylic With Cold Wax on Panel
48" x 48"



"As an Abstract Expressionist painter my only tools are color, movement, and mark-making. Every color reacts with another and continues into a fluid movement; my goal is to make my imagination and the panel meet each other. My paintings emerge from the emotion I feel in the moment my brush touches a blank surface. I am a very physical and spontaneous painter."

↑ *Shifting*
2012
Acrylic With Cold Wax on Panel
48" x 48"

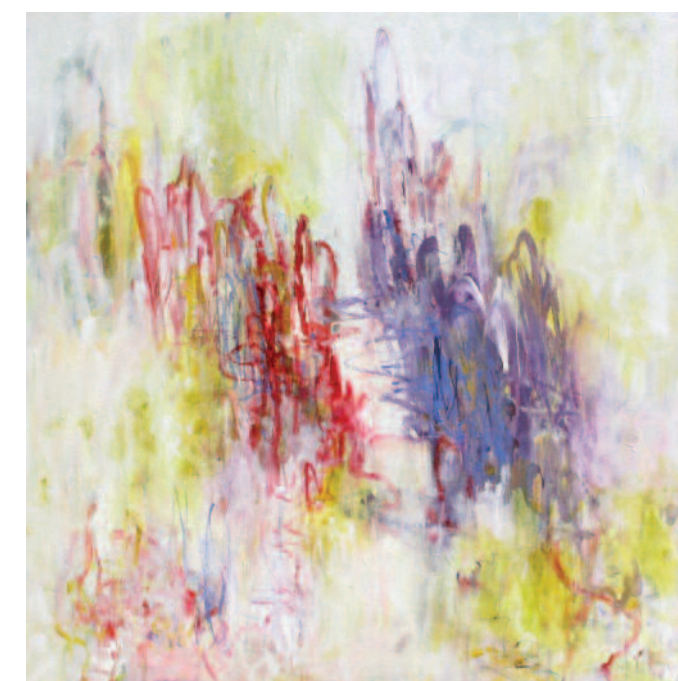


“I thought Brenda’s works brought a whole different level of cache to the gallery from day one. I love the chalky, matt finish to them and think they are a great balance to some of the other, more animated and vibrant works displayed in the gallery.”

↑ *Another Door Opens III*
2011
Acrylic With Cold Wax on Panel
42" x 42"

→ *A Day To Remember*
2012
Acrylic With Cold Wax on Panel
40" x 40"

↗ (Above) *Journey Of Uncertainty I*
2011
Acrylic With Cold Wax on Panel
60" x 40"



a blank surface. I am a very physical and spontaneous painter. Moving back and forth with decisive brush strokes and dynamic gestures, I work rapidly to capture that ephemeral feeling in tangible form.”

Abstract painting is commonly considered to represent such things as emotions, sounds, spiritual and simplified reality, where often only the essence is left. Truly compelling abstract painting elicits an emotional response from the viewer, and conveys only the quintessence of an object without actually having it appear visually. Zappitell’s works, like those of her contemporaries, have conveyed exactly that. “I begin without expectations and work on a subconscious level that disregards logic. Guided by a primal inner voice, I surrender control to the paint, the brush, and a visceral process of creative discovery. I apply many layers to my paintings leaving evidence of early marks as a sense of my progression,” Zappitell said.

Tracy Gielbert, who owns Gallery Orange, describes Zappitell’s paintings as relaxing and intriguing, with a color and depth that she seldom finds in artists’ works. “I thought Brenda’s works brought a whole different level of cache to the gallery from day one. I love the chalky, matt finish to them and think they are a great balance to some of the other, more animated and vibrant works displayed in the gallery.”

Gielbert discovered Zappitell while in Santa Fe, where she also met Gigi Mills and Susan Morosky, two other artists currently displaying at Gallery Orange. Gielbert expects the artists she shows in her gallery to be prolific, hard-working and full of positive energy, and Zappitell has gone above and beyond expectations. Her paintings have drawn fascinated crowds into the Royal Street gallery from London, Germany, and Switzerland, and the international enthrallment of Zappitell’s works is easy to see. Though her art doesn’t represent concrete objects, Zappitell’s paintings are emotionally cognizant and thought provoking, eliciting a specific response from the viewer.

“Abstract painting is much more challenging than figurative work because it’s coming out of the imagination. As the viewer or the artist you’re reacting to it instantly. I have no hesitation or concern with my technique because I approach the panel as an evolving process,” Zappitell said.” I had to go through different phases when perfecting



my technique. It was like peeling an onion, until I got to the core of my ideas.”

Zappitell uses acrylic paints mixed with cold wax, creating a unique surface quality.

“I’m very fond of the finished product that this media type gives me, and I’m one of very few artists that use this paint on wax form.”

A native of Florida, Zappitell has been residing in New Mexico with her family for several years, but has recently moved back to Florida. Like many artists, Zappitell is influenced by her everyday environs - location, setting, time of day, and the season to name a few - which become a part of the emotions she elicits through her paintings.

“There was a definite change in my color palette when I moved,” Zappitell explained. “The tropical environment in Florida is very different than New Mexico. The greens, the yellows the whole color scheme of my paintings changed, it became more vibrant in a way. In contrast, however, New Mexico has the most beautiful skies and sunsets.”

It is easy to see why Zappitell’s work has become such a success with both international and local crowds. The colors, themes, emotions and composition of her work inevitably draw in the viewer with fascination and a sense of innovation. ■