



Brushstrokes of Color - Jacob Ouillette

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by Pat Rogers

It's a quiet show. Paintings by Jacob Ouillette occupy calculated spaces on the walls of the Remsenburg Academy. There's a sympathy between the paintings. Each is made of measured brushes of color. The brushstrokes create compositions that hint at improvised freedom, if you settle in and look.



Jetty by Jacob Ouillette

Harmony finds its anchor in math, spiritual traditions and symmetry. The paintings emphasize color and the profound nature of abstraction, Ouillette said.

"What I'm most interested in is color," Ouillette said. "I use color more like Impressionism. I reduce to dramatically apply color using my own method."

"Brushstroke Paintings: A Solo Show by Jacob Ouillette" at The Remsenburg Academy is Ouillette's first solo exhibition where the Brushstroke Paintings have been singularly exhibited. Work on the series first began while in residency at the Edward F. Albee Foundation in Montauk, NY.

Each painting in the series uses the same brush size to make the expressive paint strokes. Brush size among the series varies. Brush width varies from 2" to 12", depending on the size of the work, Ouillette said.

The peace found in the paintings may be conjured by the number of brushstrokes. Each painting has 108, Ouillette said. This number is not random: 108 has a lot going for it. Spirituality, mysticism and math point to 108 as a significant number, said Ouillette.



Horus by Jacob Ouillette

108 is the number of beads in Buddhist prayer beads (mantra counting beads). There are 108 energy lines that converge to form the heart chakra. 108 has significance in Hindu and Islam.

Further, the diameter of the Sun is 108 times the diameter of the Earth. The distance from the Sun to the Earth is 108 times the diameter of the Sun. The average distance of the Moon from the Earth is 108 times the diameter of the Moon.

There is no other planetary arrangement, that we know of, where the sun and moon appear to be the same size when gazing at the sky, Ouillette said. This can be attributed to the 108 relationships.

108 has relationships to 12×9 , which are invested with their own spiritual symbolism and power, said Ouillette. $12 \times 9 = 108$. In astrology, there are 12 houses 9 planets. 108 relates to the Powers of 1, 2 and 3, ultimately multiplying to 108.

Ouillette's paintings are not about calculations and rigid math theory. Improvisation and chance are liberally mixed for each painting and the colors that end up in them.



Vulcan by Jacob Ouillette

The brush strokes can go their own way.

Each swath of color has some randomness to it. There are sways and dips. The motion the brush takes while making them is an important part of the art, said Ouillette.

Colors are not planned beforehand-colors are selected by intuition, instinct and pure chance.

"I welcome the accident," he said.



Hector by Jacob Ouillette

Despite the emphasis on color, Ouillette's paintings do not borrow any pages from Color Field painting. His work is inspired by Modern Art, Abstraction, Minimalism and Impressionism, he said.

He's also inspired by music. An amateur harmonic player, Ouillette is attracted to the improvisation nature of blues and jazz. Music and colors each have their own way of vibrating and creating energy, he said.

"The rhythm, and the way the colors are applied, create this vibration and a universality," he said. "There's an energy and movement in the painting."



Triptych (Bay, River, Hills) by Jacob
Ouillette installed at The Remsenburg
Academy

Ouillette's also interested in the different ways harmonies and dissonance are created and interact. The shape the colors take are both iconic and organic, he said.

Reducing paintings into quilts of color is something Ouillette started developing a few years ago. Providing space around each brushstroke is not part of the random. Expression needs its own space to breathe. The best way to let that happen is to provide a neutral space where the individual marks can be viewed separately or as part of the group that makes up the painting.

While the painting grid is planned (108 brushstrokes, space around each color, the paintbrush size), freedom is found in making the work.

"The color is spontaneous," he said. "I'm curious. I want to know what it's going to look like. The only way to find out is to do it."



Jacob Ouillette at The Remsenburg Academy

Jacob Ouillette's art has been exhibited at Dean Project (Long Island City), Open Source (Brooklyn), Boltax Gallery (Shelter Island) and galleries in New Orleans and Kittery, Maine. With the Dean Project, Ouillette's art has been exhibited at art fairs held in Basel, Toronto, London, Miami and New York City.

Ouillette's fellowships include the Edward F. Albee Foundation in Montauk and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Ouillette lives in Manhattan and Remsenburg.

BASIC FACTS: "Brushstroke Paintings: A Solo Show by Jacob Ouillette" is on view at the Remsenburg Academy through September 11, 2011. The gallery is open until 6 p.m.

UPCOMING: Jacob Ouillette will exhibit monumental works in a solo show at the Nancy Margolis Gallery from October 20 to November 26, 2011. An opening is being held on October 20 from 6 to 8 p.m. Recent works of paintings and drawings will be exhibited. The gallery is located at 523 West 25th Street, New York, NY. www.nancymargolisgallery.com

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