



Barbara Bilotta's Fierce Abstractions Spotlighted in Three Solo Shows

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by Jenna Weis

Imagination can break any boundary and go in any direction, leading to virtually endless possibilities. For proof of this assertion, art lovers need look no further than the fiercely vibrant paintings that ignite the walls of the "Cross Currents: The Art of Barbara Bilotta" in the Jeanie Tengelsen Gallery at Art League of Long Island in Dix Hills, N.Y. on view through August 24, 2014.

Elements of nature and bold colors spark inspiration, and then fuse with Bilotta's active imagination to yield artwork that is highly energized. The Art League exhibit is Bilotta's third solo show since the start of the summer season; her two previous one-woman shows were at the South Street Gallery in Greenport and the Southold Historical Society's Cosden Price Gallery, both on the North Fork of Long Island.

The artist exhibits regularly at the Crazy Monkey Gallery in Amaganset, has been awarded honors by guest jurors at the East End Arts gallery in Riverhead, has presented work in the 2012 juried art show at the Southampton Cultural Center and has exhibited with the Agora Gallery in New York City, to name only a few of her past gallery exhibitions.

Working in abstraction, Bilotta finds limitless variety in the arrangement of compositional elements, light and color. As she noted in response to an email query: "I find abstraction and flowing patterns a never-ending fascination."

The loose, open forms that cascade throughout and even around the sides of the canvas fully engage the viewer, drawing the eye into the textural quality of the the multi-layered application of a cool color palette. As Bilotta noted in an email, expressionism in her work is in the overall composition of colors and forms.

"Composition may be structure or a pattern," she wrote, "but in either case it is always expressionism."

While each composition springs from Bilotta's vision, what exactly is being expressed by the artist is left to the viewer's imagination.

Not even the flatness of the canvas restricts the liveliness of these abstract paintings, which all have an added dimension thanks to the crystal clear sheen and highly polished brightness derived from a coating of resin over the acrylic paints.

"I specialize in one of a kind contemporary abstract art created by using acrylic paint and a glass-like pigmented epoxy resin," Bilotta wrote. "I developed this distinctive technique about 10 years

ago while working in Miami. My goal is to transform the canvas with color and movement, manipulating and permanently pressuring the acrylic paint in a UV resin.”

For this viewer, the resin seems to accentuate the liquid feel of the compositions, and the glass-like shine reveals different hues and tones in the colors the artist has applied.

The works in the exhibition include some that suggest an active body of water from different perspectives: standing on a beach overlooking the ocean out to the horizon in some; completely surrounded by water in others, such as *Tranquil Ascension*, one of the artist’s favorites. Dark and soft blues are brightened by highlights of yellows and greens that saturate the space as they draw the eye to a focal point above the surface, a large, blinding form that seems to be the sole source of light.



“Tranquil Ascension” by Barbara Bilotta. 52 x 46 x 2 inches.

Another engaging piece with a similar effect, *Window to the Seam*, contains multiple tones of blues in four vertical canvases that are united only through the combination of highlights and darks that flow from one canvas to the next.



“Window to the Sea” by Barbara Bilotta. 36 x 27 overall. 4 pieces.

Other paintings seem to capture the essence of rock formations or resemble electric currents. The variety of color is broader in these works, with rich purples and teals that are softened by more pastel shades, drawing the eye across the canvas in a more linear fashion. Her piece *G-Force* is an example of this type of painting, and another of the artist’s favorites.

As she explained in her email, she likes the painting because of its “visual bursts of color and form, which I feel allow the viewer to explore my work in a pleasing rhythm full of energy and passion.”



“G Force” by Barbara Bilotta. 48 x 48 inches.

“What first inspires me to create a piece of art,” she wrote, “is my affection for color and the ability and freedom of having a vivid imagination, which enables me to be an artist.”

While the sensibility and methodology remain fairly consistent in the “Cross Currents” show, Bilotta likes to explore other conceptual approaches as well. One example of a different approach cited by the artist can be found in her piece *Internet*, which is not on view in the Art League show.



“Internet” by Barbara Bilotta. 22 x 28 inches.

An oil painting with a more rigid arrangement of various shapes and outlines, *Internet* suggests that one source of inspiration might be Picasso, who Bilotta acknowledges has influenced her work. Compared to her paintings exhibited in “Cross Currents,” in this piece the vibrancy of the colors takes a backseat to the highly complex composition.

“In my piece *Internet*,” she wrote, “I was attempting to use organization of images to largely determine its effect. In more recent works, I use composition as expression.”

No matter what visual direction Bilotta’s imagination takes, expression in the abstract form is always a key element. Whatever the viewer may make of it, she believes it is her “expressionism” that makes the work compelling.

“One of the mysteries of art is that it does affect those who see it,” she concluded. “I wish to keep the stream of creativity flowing steadily for years to come.”

BASIC INFO: “Cross Currents” is on view until August 24, 2014 at Art League of Long Island in the Jeanie Tengelsen Gallery. The gallery is located at 107 E. Deer Park Road, Dix Hills, NY 11746. www.artleagueli.net.

Barbara Bilotta’s art is included in the “Juried Fine Art 2014” at the Smithtown Township Arts Council’s Mills Pond Gallery, 660 Route 25A, St.James, NY 11780. The show opens August 23 and continues through September 27, 2014. An Opening Reception takes place on August 23 from 2 to 4 p.m. Bilotta’s artwork, *A Fine Balance of Color*, received an Honorable Mention for Painting. www.stacarts.org

Barbara Bilotta’s work can be viewed online at www.barbarabilotta.com. She is based on Long Island.