



# Springs Invitational Art Stories: Phyllis Chillingworth on Painting the Points...from Montauk to Lazy Point

August 18, 2017

by Pat Rogers

Phyllis Chillingworth paints in oil and watercolor on location in far-away places and at her studio in Montauk, N.Y. Whether in Nova Scotia, Montana or Montauk, the rhythms and surprising color-juxtapositions found in nature ignite her passion to paint and transform those feelings onto the canvas, she said.

For Chillingworth, painting is like going on a journey. While roaming places she's never been before, the vistas that are ultimately transformed into paintings are selected after an aha! moment strikes her and intuition becomes married with inspiration.

"When in the process of painting the world truly expands; new possibilities spring forward and a new translation is ignited," said Chillingworth. "First, comes a moment, an experience that excites my senses and propels me to paint. Then the world expands and a new interpretation is created. It is like a 'jumping-off-point' into the unknown. I would like viewers to connect with my paintings and to discover a new perception for themselves."

For the [Springs Invitational](#), curator Teri Kennedy selected the watercolor Lazy Point. The painting was inspired by a unique vantage point on Napeague, not far from [Phyllis Chillingworth's](#) studio in Montauk, N.Y., located on Fort Pond and facing the bay.

"Phyllis has a dynamic brush stroke that informs her work and to me carried the force of wind when I might stand on the beach at Lazy Point," Kennedy said. "I chose this piece because it, like many pieces in the show, speaks to our memories and experience of life here on the far East End."



"Lazy Point" by Phyllis Chillingworth, 2016. Watercolor, 15.75 x 25.75 inches. Copyright: Phyllis Chillingworth. Courtesy of the artist.

Lazy Point has many deep associations for Chillingworth, she said. It reminds her of many childhood summers spent in North Truro, Cape Cod, where 'love-of-sea' became part of her DNA.

"Lazy Point is a place everything feels free and wild, much like it was hundreds of years ago," Chillingworth said. "The skies are huge and changing, as I am changing; the tidal currents are swift and the light is startlingly bright. All is in flux. I find the place transformative and I strive to harness that energy in a new way on to the canvas. Swimming there is divine."

Lazy Point is also near the Art Barge in Amagansett, where she first studied watercolor with [Ophrah Shemesh](#) in 2003. "Ophrah continues to have a profound influence on me, with my oil painting and on my artistic journey," Chillingworth said.

She is currently working on a new body of oil paintings inspired by her journey to Zihuantanejo, Mexico. Bold colors, patterns and memories of being immersed in the culture fuel her imagination as she makes the paintings, she said. The series is expected to be featured in her fourth solo show at [Atlantic Gallery](#) in New York City, presented from June 5 to 23, 2018.



"On the Road" by Phyllis Chillingworth, 2017. Oil, 24 x 32 inches.  
Copyright: Phyllis Chillingworth. Courtesy of the artist.

Phyllis Chillingworth took some time away from painting and traveling to talk with Pat Rogers of Hamptons Art Hub about the Springs Invitational, the essence of her paintings, how looking translates into moments captured in art and why traveling is the first step in her artist process.

### **Pat Rogers: What is essential in your process?**

**Phyllis Chillingworth:** I have to have a strong emotional connection to the subject or to the memory of an event and an idea as to how to transform it into a painting. I seek a new 'translation' of what I am seeing and feeling. I am always looking for an element of surprise; spontaneity and invention abound."



"Arrival, Montuak" by Phyllis Chillingworth, 2014. Oil, 26 x 32 inches.  
Photo: Gary Mamay, Copyright: Phyllis Chillingworth. Courtesy of the artist.

### **PR: Where do you find inspiration?**

**PC:** Inspiration comes to me from many different sources; it can come from being in an exotic place or from a turn in the road where light is magic or from a poem or a piece of music. I find Rainer Maria Rilke and R W Emerson particularly stimulating. I have a craving for looking, ready to

pounce on a moment that excites my senses and 'sparks' an idea.



"Mt. Victoire" by Phyllis Chillingworth, 2014. Oil, 26 x 32 inches. Photo: Gary Mamay, Copyright: Phyllis Chillingworth. Courtesy of the artist.

**PR: What are you drawn to?**

**PC:** I am drawn to beauty, to movement, propelled to stretch boundaries, to find new ground. I look for moments that can 'springboard' into something else, more expansive and surprising. My basic orientation to life is aesthetic. I resist labels; they are ultimately constricting.

**PR: How has travel influenced your painting?**

**PC:** My paintings spring from an experience or a moment that startles my senses. For example, when I was driving up a hill in northern Montana, the monumental Mission Mountains suddenly appeared with ribbons of clear blue sky and lyrical clouds. It blew me away; I knew I had to paint this. I am always searching for events that stir my emotions and that present new ways to express them.



"Mission Mountain, Montana" by Phyllis Chillingworth, 2016. Oil, 26 X 32 inches, Photo: Gary Mamay, Copyright: Phyllis Chillingworth. Courtesy of the artist.

**PR: How is movement important in your paintings and how did making films at Yale add to this?**

**PC:** At Yale, I produced two animated films...taking live 16mm footage and re-animating the images on an Oxberry animation stand. This time had me experimenting with images in motion, overlapping them and creating fantasy stories in film such as "The Legend of Rockmonotone."

In nature, everything is in flux, the wind, water currents and the changing light. I connect with that changing energy and it figures into how I paint with many overlapping brush strokes. Every time I go out to paint, the scene is different and I am different. I strive to harness that energy.

Writers such as R W Emerson and Rainer Maria Rilke have increased my fascination with the elusive nature of the world.

*"In nature every moment is new...nothing is secure but life, transition and the energizing spirit.  
Nature is indefinable, immeasurable, but we know that it pervades and contains us." -R W  
Emerson*



"Radiance" by Phyllis Chillingworth. Oil on linen, 22 x 22 inches.  
Copyright Phyllis Chillingworth. Courtesy of the artist.



"Cape Light" by Phyllis Chillingworth, 2016. Oil, 24 X 24 inches,  
Photo: Gary Mamay, Copyright: Phyllis Chillingworth. Courtesy of  
the artist.

**PR: What does it mean to you to be part of the Springs 50th Invitational?**

**PC:** I am thrilled to be included in the Springs 50th Invitational! Ashawagh Hall is one of my favorite places; it is an historic event and I knew that Teri Kennedy, poet, artist and curator, was creating something exceptional and she did! To be part of the community of artists means so much to me. The synergy is great! It is an honor.



Phyllis Chillingworth while painting in Nova Scotia. Courtesy of the artist.

Phyllis Chillingworth graduated with a BS from The Institute of Design, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago, where experimentation became an essential component of her creativity. She received a BFA and MFA from the School of Art and Architecture, Yale University, where she produced two animated films. She has studied painting with Oprah Shemesh in New York City and Visual Arts Italy, Gaeta, Italy. Her work has been exhibited in numerous shows in New York City and The Hamptons.

Before painting full time, she was President and Creative Director of Chillingworth/Radding Inc., design, marketing and advertising firm in New York City. She is a founding and current board of director member of HousingPlus, an agency in NYC that provides safe permanent housing for formerly homeless women and families.



Phyllis Chillingworth at her 2016 solo show, "Currents" at Atlantic Gallery in NYC. Photo courtesy of the artist.

[The 2017 Springs Invitational Art Exhibition](#) presents art by around 114 artists with work selected by Invitational curator Teri Kennedy. The show will be on view from August 4 to 20, 2017 at Ashawagh Hall in East Hampton, N.Y. Presented by the Springs Improvement Society (SIS), the exhibition is a benefit for SIS which maintains and manages Ashawagh all.

The "Springs Invitational Art Stories Series" was arranged by Teri Kennedy to reveal the stories behind some of the art on view, presented from the point of view of the exhibiting artist or artists. To read the series introduction for the Springs Invitational Art Stories, click [here](#).

---

**BASIC FACTS:** The Springs Invitational will be held August 4 to 20, 2017 at Ashawagh Hall, 780 Springs Fireplace Rd, East Hampton, NY 11937. [www.ashawagh-hall.org](http://www.ashawagh-hall.org). Phyllis Chillingworth is based in Montauk, N.Y. at "the end" of The Hamptons. To learn more about Phyllis Chillingworth and to view her work, visit [www.phyllischillingworth.com](http://www.phyllischillingworth.com).

---

Copyright 2017 Hamptons Art Hub LLC. All rights reserved.