

## Brattleboro: Emily Mason's Chromatic Celebrations

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**BRATTLEBORO &GT;&GT;** Each of the Emily Mason prints hanging at Mitchell-Giddings Fine Arts at 183 Main St. represents a different experience for the artist.

The show, "Chromatic Celebrations," highlight's Mason's work with several different print makers who she has collaborated with since the mid-1980s. The artwork is presented in the basement gallery to encourage the viewer to explore the range of color and texture Mason is able to achieve working through different printing techniques. And each monoprint also brings the viewer closer to what Mason said was her own journey of discovery which she sets out on each time she begins a work.

"When I start I don't want to know too much," Mason explained about her process of developing a piece of work through the variety of printing techniques on display. "It is not mindless work, but I try to get the mind out of the way so I can have better access to what I want to do."

Mason, who splits her time between New York and Vermont, is an American artist widely known for her abstract color field paintings, and it is easy to see the similarities between the prints inside the Brattleboro gallery and her other work.

Color spills over from the outer edges of each print. The images are both sharp and spontaneous, owing to the techniques employed in each print and the exploration the artist undertakes while mastering the materials and tools.

In 1987 Mason worked in the Garner Tullis workshop in Santa Barbara, Calif.

While most print presses push paper through with a roller, Mason printed her works from above. The artist works directly on the plate without a matrix, and in the process creates a unique work each time.

The Mitchell-Giddings show also includes works Mason completed with printer Lisa Mackie.

Mason experimented with a silk covered plate and paper, finding shapes and colors in the interplay of fiber, paper and ink. Throughout the process, Mason said, she would learn from the print maker and then experiment, printing layer upon layer until the final image takes shape.

"When you paint you can sometimes get into one area but with print making you are always dealing with the whole image," she explained. "The technique is a vehicle for achieving what I want. It is a pathway."

Each section of the gallery shows Mason's work with one of the four print makers or workshops she has produced the prints. And while a vein of abstraction and color runs through each piece, every print at the same time tells its own story of experimentation and technique, and of flaws and surprise.

Mason worked with Janis Stemmermann, who helped her develop a carborundum printing technique. During the process the artist brushes on a mixture of carborundum grit and acrylic paint on clear Plexiglas.

She then manipulates different plates bringing an emerging form into focus.

The process, she said, came about after she felt the traditional printing method to be too stiff and she was

looking to bring more spontaneity into the work

"It was a way of getting immediacy into the printing. Some printmaking techniques are stodgy and I don't want that," she said. "But I don't like to plan ahead too much because I never want to really know what the final image is going to look like. Each print I make is a new experience."

In the 2003 carborundum monoprint in the show, "Seen Through" color and form appear shaded by layers of smoke or haze.

Mason's paintings are shown exclusively at galleries in New York and Santa Fe, N.M. and the Brattleboro show affords a rare opportunity to view the prints the artist has produced over the past 30 years.

Mitchell-Giddings Fine Arts is open Wednesday through Saturday from 11-5 p.m. and the Mason show will be on display through Aug. 16.

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