



Lavelle, Clay Pot, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 in, 2019

Cascade Weekly February, 2019

Visual

Lehmann and Lavelle

Abstraction in action

See

More:

WHAT: Artist talk with Margy Lavelle

WHEN: 4pm Sat., Feb. 16 (the exhibit shows through Feb. 24)

WHERE: i.e. gallery, 5800 Cains Court, Edison

INFO: <http://www.ieedison.com>

WHAT: Anita H. Lehmann's "Westbound"

WHEN: Through February

WHERE: Perry and Carlson Gallery, 504 S. First St., Mount Vernon

INFO: <http://www.perryandcarlson.com>

By Stephen Hunter

Wednesday, February 13, 2019

This month offers a fine opportunity to see and compare the work of two outstanding artists—Anita Lehmann at Perry and Carlson Gallery in Mount Vernon, and Margy Lavelle at i.e. gallery in Edison. Each creates “abstractions,” but their approaches are very different.

Lehmann’s works in the “Westbound” exhibit arise from her “westbound journey” to Seattle 35 years ago, and evoke the excitement and passion she feels for the divine landscape of the Pacific Northwest.

A follower of the distinguished painter and teacher Richard Diebenkorn, she begins by sketching and photographing outdoor scenes. In her studio she selects the process appropriate to fulfill her visions—monotype, pastel, gouache, watercolor or a combination. The result, she insists, is always an abstract composition, even if it is “depictive.”

Her work at Perry and Carlson conveys a strong feeling of place and time. The viewer immediately grasps a sweep of fields, patches of color opening under sky or cloud. “Warm Day,” (pastel on monotype) is open, relaxing and free; we have arrived at a peaceful place.

In contrast, “Approach,” (watercolor and gouache on paper) involves less a feeling of landscape than of a state of mind. Here may be a glimpse of sky over water, seen through a window, but the heavy dark masses at the center demand our attention. We don’t need the title to warn us that a situation must be confronted.

“From the Train” is all about motion. “Intervals” is a lovely abstract, with yellow/orange panels alternating with gray, conveying a feeling of resolution. “Arrival” does not suggest warmth or joy; the title suggests the completion of something, even as the artwork implies that another challenge must now be addressed.

Margy Lavelle begins each painting with a charcoal sketch, “but that initial inspiration may be long gone from the final work.” She follows intuition, mixing and smoothing paint onto the canvas with a palette knife, then scraping paint off. Sheens and textures emerge and gradually an image appears. “If the mood of it remains, I am successful,” she says.

Two of her works in “The Flight of Gabriel” exhibit reference the saints and protectors of her childhood, archangels Gabriel and Michael, “big, strong, muscular men [who were] protectors and fighters for the good.”

Lavelle describes this series of paintings as “devastated landscapes or night skies” into which she has inserted “symbols of grace”—a moon, a cup, a window, a house. In the titular “Flight of Gabriel” oil painting, you can just make out a hint of dragonfly wings in the air—a memory of the angel’s presence receding from twisted shapes below.

In “Cup” (oil on canvas), a white chalice floats on a labored background of black and green. The image may be dissolving even as we watch.

Paintings like this place Lavelle's work squarely within the heritage of the Northwest visionary artists, Mark Tobey, Richard Gilkey, and others whose art comes from deep within. And it is so fitting to find it in vibrant Edison, a village crouching at the very edge of high tide.