

Artist Captures Energy for Canvas

By Pat Rogers

Squiggly lines atop deep fields of color. Sometimes it seems as if intricate layers of oceanic depths teeming with possibility lie beneath surfaces wiggling with life. Other times, it's as if the entire universe, captured in a night sky, is the backdrop for energy that seems to suggest some order and connection.

This is just some of the imagery conjured by the abstract paintings of Margaret Garrett.

Her solo exhibition, "Tuning Fields," opened on April 1 at the Levitas Gallery at the Southampton Cultural Center (SCC) in Southampton and will remain on view through April 13. The extensive series on view in the show visually suggests "tuning" fields, or "fields of energy of vibrations between things and the imagined rhythmic patterns and harmonies that emerge," according to an artist's statement by Ms. Garrett.

The result is a body of work that jumps with movement. This busy energy exists within each canvas and vibrates across the spaces between paintings. This is exactly what Ms. Garrett hoped would happen when she set out to create a body of work to exhibit for the solo show.

The best illustration of that effort can be found stretched across a long wall where paintings of identical sizes can be found. While the size of each artwork is the same (20 inches by 16 inches), each painting is distinct. Motion captured in paint strokes is only one of Ms. Garrett's concerns—color and its impact is



Margaret Garrett with two of her paintings, which are currently on view at the Levitas Gallery at the Southampton Cultural Center.

PAT ROGERS

the same (20 inches by 16 inches), each painting is distinct. Motion captured in paint strokes is only one of Ms. Garrett's concerns—color and its impact is another. There are paintings soaked in red, in deep blue and in yellow. Dramatic shades of black and delicate beiges accented with orange appear in other works.

"I love color," she said. "It helps me feel the mood of that piece."

Sometimes energy bursts in shapes that are like those left behind as fireworks fade back into the darkness. The impressions created on these canvases are accented by delicate vertical strands that could be tiny dancers stopped in mid-motion. This imagery is even stronger in two large canvases (60 inches by 56 inches) across from the line of paintings of acrylic and ink mounted on board.

These paintings put the lines that invoke "dancers" center stage, perhaps harking back to Ms. Garrett's prior career as a ballet and modern dancer. As in a ballet, the separate dances work on their own and as part of program that provides a larger point.

"It's my movement and my energy," she said. "There's something about each of the paintings that reminds me of a stage. I see them as individual paintings. Each one has its own journey. There's a meditative quality when I was making them. I worked with each one to really develop the painting and go where the painting led."

Much of the work was made expressively for the solo show. After being awarded a spot in the new committee-selected lineup, Ms. Garrett decided to continue developing the idea to see where it could go. She was making paintings on paper and decided to make works that could be mounted on boards, as well as paintings on canvas. There are 28 paintings on exhibit.

For the show, she decided to exhibit paintings from earlier series that seem to resound with color or activity. After examining the space inside the gallery, Ms. Garrett decided to go beyond hanging paintings on the two main walls inside the gallery.

The lobby with its colored walls also became a setting for her work. A short walk up a ramp for handicapped access not only winds around to bring visitors from the lobby to the gallery's

elevated entrance, but provides a surprise: Those who travel the incline are rewarded with no fewer than six paintings that wouldn't have been seen otherwise.

Likewise, Ms. Garrett installed two paintings inside the theater that is partitioned from the gallery. An individual painting occupies each of the opposite walls inside the performance space, to provide theatergoers a visual taste of the feast inside.

Ms. Garrett has exhibited her work at

Sara Nightingale Gallery, Guild Hall, the Nabi Gallery and Lizan-Tops. Her work has also been shown in Chelsea at the Heidi Co Gallery and Markel Fine Arts. Her work can be viewed at www.margaretgarrett.com.

"Tuning Fields" will remain on view through April 13 at the Levitas Gallery at the Southampton Cultural Center, 25 Pond Lane, Southampton. The gallery is open Friday through Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment by calling 631-384-2008.