

'Visual jazz'

Artist Terrie Corbett takes improvisational approach

Amanda Sieradzki Council on Culture & Arts

Terrie Corbett's oil and cold wax painting, "Moonflowers: Advent" is in fact a painting within several paintings. Currently, the piece is hanging in her solo show at the Artport Gallery through Oct. 26. On closer inspection, the eye would never guess that buried underneath its topmost layer of yellows, reds and blacks, there are ten different iterations of the work.

Corbett says it is all part of her encaustic mark-making process. She adds and subtracts paint and wax using everything from dental tools, skewers and nails to silicone scrapers, paper towels and her hands. Corbett calls this "making" a painting, as she rarely uses a brush. The end result is almost archaeological in how the work divulges its hidden caverns, textured lines, dips and crevasses.

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Terrie Corbett's "Many Voices, One Heart" at the Artport Gallery can be seen in person or virtually in COCA's online gallery. TERRIE CORBETT



Terri Corbett's "Carnival." Corbett's "Many Voices, One Heart" at the Artport Gallery can be seen in person or virtually in COCA's online gallery. TERRIE CORBETT



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Corbett

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"The interesting part for me is that it reveals colors and marks that are below the surface," says Corbett. "Sometimes that helps the painting and you have some color you might not have put in there initially. It's a history of what you've been doing."

This fall, Corbett's "Many Voices, One Heart" at the Artport Gallery can be seen in person or virtually in COCA's online gallery. COCA curates and manages the gallery as part of the City of Tallahassee's Art in Public Places program. This particular show is unique in its showcasing of encaustic paintings. Corbett uses the ancient technique to layer pigment with melted wax, creating a mixture that fuses with previous layers and becomes "moldable."

Corbett says she first learned about encaustic painting in her art history classes but fell in love with the medium after viewing the work of local Tallahassee artist, Nancy Reid Gunn. She admired Gunn's experimental and contemporary take on the medium and remembers the first time she worked up the nerve to talk to the late artist at an FSU Museum of Fine Arts exhibition.

"I saw her across the room, and just as I got up to her, I saw she was pointing to my drawing on the wall and was saying how nice it was," recalls Corbett. "I was so tickled by that, I thought that was good enough and backed away without introducing myself."

Many years later, she and Gunn struck up a close friendship. When Gunn passed away suddenly in 2007, Corbett's husband gifted her one of Gunn's paintings for their wedding anniversary. She still uses some of Gunn's tools and has them hanging in her studio for inspiration.

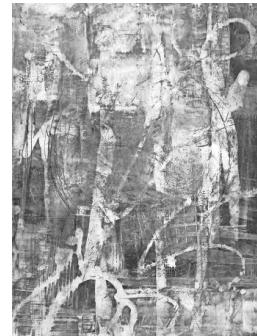
Aside from Gunn, Corbett credits her husband, Chuck, with playing a large role in her art-making. An artist himself, he builds the cradle boards she uses to hold the layers of encaustic wax and pigment. They share a home studio that stays well ventilated with six windows and several fans, as the wax can release toxic fumes if overheated.

Corbett emphasizes that safety is a priority when working in this medium given the tools and toxic materials. She appreciates the versatility the medium offers. The wax can be mixed with a variety of media including watercolor, pastel and charcoal. This allows her to collage and play with the "visual jazz" aspect of her process — another nod to her husband who was once a musician and music teacher. Corbett often listens to music while she paints.

"It's improvisational, expressive and intuitive," says Corbett. "Sometimes I am more quiet and my palette reflects that. Some days I have 'Ode to Joy' by Beethoven on or a big band jazz piece and I'm going to be more exuberant with the way I put the paint on."

Corbett shies away from being too analytical when applying paint. Instead, she stays in the moment and allows the work to reflect her inner and outer landscapes. Whenever she feels stuck, she remembers advice from her art teacher who once told her to sit and recall something she enjoyed, like the sound her cats make when she pets them.

"It was a good lesson because we all get stuck sometimes and I've always



"Here Comes The Sun," Terrie Corbett's Oil And Cold Wax. She adds and subtracts paint and wax using everything from dental tools, skewers and nails to silicone scrapers, paper towels and her hands. **TERRIE CORBETT**

If you go

What: Many Voices, One Heart:
Paintings by Terrie Corbett

When: Daily 8 a.m.-11:30 p.m. through Oct. 26

Where: Artport Gallery, Tallahassee International Airport, 3300 Capital Circle SW

Cost: Free

Contact: For more information please call 850-224-2500. To view the digital version of this exhibit, please visit <https://cocaonlinegallery.zenfolio.com>.

felt that helped me if you can call on those things that are pleasurable," says Corbett, whose piece "All My Cats Purr Like This" won first place at last year's Creative Tallahassee show.

"1000 Kittens Purring" followed that piece and is exhibited as part of the Artport show. Other paintings also give off a similar synesthetic nature — blending audio with visuals — like "Children's Laughter," with multi-color currents echoing across the painting like soundwaves.

Corbett engages all five senses and enjoys feeling the surface texture of paintings like "Moonflowers: Blue Tower." Sometimes titles come to her quickly after painting, while others begin with a title. She says the title for "Running Through the Sprinkler" came immediately after setting it down on her easel and looking at the swirls of liquid blue lines. Mostly, she hopes that whether viewers enjoy abstract works or not, they will walk away having delighted in seeing something new.

"I like for big paintings to be intimate and small paintings to read as big," says Corbett. "One of the reasons for the show's title is because my mother and I have talked about painting with my inside voice and outside voice. My paintings seem to reflect exuberant enthusiasm and quiet reflection, and you get to see both of those aspects here."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).