



Symmetry of asymmetry

TRACEY ADAMS USES ANCIENT TECHNIQUE TO EXPLORE NATURE'S HARMONICS

By LISA CRAWFORD WATSON
Herald Correspondent

Tracey Adams dips her brush into a cup of encaustic paint and strokes the mixture of molten wax, resin and pigment onto a panel of paper, coated with beeswax, over plywood.

By the time she returns her brush to the medium, the layer is cool and has begun to solidify.

After each layer of paint, she directs heat to the surface, causing the wax to melt and bond with preceding layers and the panel below.

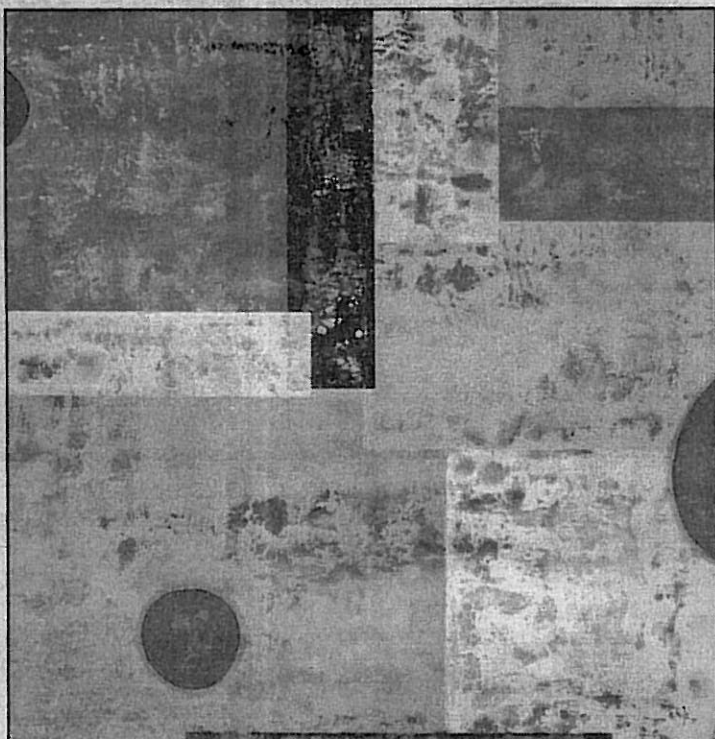
The process, a careful choreography of time and technique, can involve precise application, resulting in a delicate, translucent glaze, or the thick, encrusted surface of a more dramatic, spontaneous treatment.

Just as easily, an ill-timed hesitation can result in a useless wad of wax.

For Adams, the ancient process seems to provide an ideal medium with which to explore the intrigue of pattern and proportion that creates a natural symmetry in life and in her paintings.

"A painter, printmaker and musician, Adams has consistently been drawn to art forms that are sympathetic to structure yet open to improvisation," writes Mary Murray, former curator, Monterey Museum of Art. "Her ongoing absorption in the interplay of shape, color and pattern has led her to create prints and paintings in which relationships of harmony and balance play a significant role."

Tonight, the Monterey



The Monterey Museum of Art's Third Thursday Open House tonight features artist Tracey Adams and an exhibit of her works, "The Symmetry of Asymmetry," which continues at the museum through April 24.

Museum of Art will host an artist reception in honor of "The Symmetry of Asymmetry," Adams' ongoing exhibit of encaustic paintings.

The event coincides with the museum's regular Third Thursday Open House.

"While her earlier series of paintings contained representational images," writes Murray, "abstraction has always been largely present in her work. With encaustic, she has discovered a balance of structure and chaos that seems to suit her perfectly."

Although Greek artists were known for painting with encaustic in the 5th century, recorded use of the medium dates back to the 1st century, when it was used to paint portraits and mythological scenes on panels, as well as the coloring of marble, terra cotta and, even, ivory.

"I came to encaustic," said Adams, "after seeing it in New York a number of years ago. Here I was in this gallery, looking at a painting so luminous, like glass that had been polished with a chamois. This is what got me, seeing the

layers shine through this extraordinarily beautiful surface.

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"But don't be fooled by its beauty. It's an extremely difficult process, very difficult to learn, to master. I'm still a student of it and don't know if I'll ever feel fully in control of this process. It's a battle every time."

But then, Adams is accustomed to both challenge

and mastery.

Not every child who plinks out melodies on a tiny pressboard piano becomes Schroeder.

Not every child presented with Fur Elise at the "big piano" masters it at age 8.

Not every student graduates from college with a senior thesis of her own musical composition then earns a master's degree in conducting from the New England Conservatory of Music while concurrently studying fine art at Boston's School of the Museum of Fine Arts.

After all that, not everyone sells her piano, purchases a printing press and says, "I used to be a conductor." Not everyone is Tracey Adams.

"What motivates me is my love of creating," she has said. "I began to understand that I had a gift for communicating what I felt about music to others, both aurally and visually. During rehearsals I was able to inspire musicians to perform what I felt the composer had intended. Although I was able to experience a wonderful synthesis of things through music-making, I also recognized a creative imbalance. Music had become too administrative; my art had been put on hold. Something was missing."

Adams returned to her art — her visual art — and to the creative exploration that had characterized her music, as well.

During a visit to the Norton Simon Museum in Pasadena, she encountered a small Cezanne painting, which profoundly affected her approach to art.

"I was so taken by it," she has said, "I wanted to carry it out with me. I realized then, that there was so little I knew and so much to know. I experienced how powerful a painting can be. Here was this little two-dimensional surface that had reduced me to tears. I want to be connected to that most basic lifeline."

Adams worked with stencils and dyes, and developed a mastery of printmaking, specifically, mono prints.

She returned to the drawing

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ART OPENINGS

> FEB. 18

"(to have a happy childhood) it's never too late," by Lesley Ann Spowart. Opens with a reception from 6-8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 18 at the Lisa Coscino Gallery, 216 Grand Ave., Pacific Grove. Opening in the Front Gallery is La Mano Press, an artist-run press in Los Angeles dedicated to the promotion of printmaking. The exhibit will feature the works of Artemio Rodriguez, Joe Rendon, Unai San Martin, Poli Maricahl, Daniel Gonzales and Israel. 646-1939. Gallery hours: 11 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays.

> FEB. 18

"Segue into Spring." Thirty local artists have works in the exhibit. Appetizer reception from 2-6 p.m. Friday, Feb. 18 at Monterey Peninsula Art Foundation, 425 Cannery Row, Monterey. 655-1267.

> FEB. 18

"Coffee Call" opens at Gallery at Four One Seven. Artist reception from 6-8 p.m. Friday, for new works by Lynn Ackerman, Alvin Joe, Charles Kelly, Steve Maher, Ellie Masar and Barbara Svetlik are on exhibit. Sculptures by Jack Grayi will also be in the exhibit. Through April 10. 417 Cannery Row, Monterey. 645-9923. Gallery hours: 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays; open until 7 p.m. Fridays.

> FEB. 20

Black History Month. Reception for the artists from 3-5:30 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 20 at the Walter Lee Avery Gallery, Seaside City Hall, 440 Harcourt Ave., Seaside. 899-6811 or 899-6805.

> FEB. 25

The Pacific Grove Art Center. Reception from 7-9 p.m. Friday, Feb. 25 for "Abroad and at Home: Travel and Figurative Paintings" by David Fleming; "First Footing: An Introduction to the Art of David Lazarony; "The Art of Harley," photographs by Mary J. Enner; "Portraits of Us," paintings by Alexandra Wennagel. 568 Lighthouse Ave., Pacific Grove. 375-2208, www.pgartcenter.org. Gallery hours: 12-5 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays, 1-4 p.m. Sundays.

> FEB. 27

Salinas Valley Art Association. Annual juried art show opens Sunday, Feb. 27 at Valley Art Gallery, 218 Main St., Oldtown Salinas. Through March 25. There will be a reception from 2-5 p.m. Saturday, March 12. 449-6561. Gallery hours: 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Mon-Sat and 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Sundays.

> MARCH 5

Frog art by Chuck Scardina. 2-4 p.m. Saturday, March 5 at the Pacific Meadows Retirement Community, 5315 Carmel Valley Road, Carmel Valley. 626-0514.

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ART RECEPTION

- > **What:** Third Thursday Open House with artist Tracey Adams and her exhibit "The Symmetry of Asymmetry"
- > **Where:** The Monterey Museum of Art, 559 Pacific St., Monterey
- > **When:** Artist's reception from 5 to 7 p.m. tonight; exhibit continues through April 24
- > **Tickets:** Reception free and open to the public
- > **Information:** 372-5477