

Visual art review: The science of art

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Visual Art Review | August 8, 2007 (see in print version)



Lightning and Flower: 1, 18x11. Oil on wood panel, 2005 (Photo: Savannah Morning News)



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small, Stamps clearly delights in using traditional painting styles to manipulate time and space.

"I work out of a tradition of Spanish Baroque painters, who dramatized simple interior themes and portraits by using intense tonality and stark earthy colors," she said. "More recently, I have found inspiration in the works of the Hudson River School painters and the Luminist painters of New York who followed them in the 1920s."

Stamps reports that her recent work has been impacted by reading Gaston Bachelard's 1958 book, "The Poetics of Space," which offers a philosophical approach to understanding architecture.

"His description of everyday interior space as a container of meaning and memory has encouraged me to return to my subjects over and over," she explained, "and to always watch for new meanings to emerge."

If you go

What: "Luminous Nature," paintings and drawings by Kate Stamps

When: Through Aug. 30, artist reception at noon Aug. 29

Gallery hours: 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Where: Armstrong Atlantic State University Fine Arts Gallery, 11935 Abercorn St.

Information: 912-927-5381 or www.finearts.armstrong.edu

After reading about cloning, artist Kate Stamps recently decided to paint a series of geranium still lifes in which natural forms self-consciously repeat and mirror one another.

"I often take an issue of discovery I learn about in science and nature," she said, "and let it work into a painting."

The intersection between art and science serves as an ongoing source of fascination for this Brooklyn-based painter. In "Luminous Nature," an exhibit of recent drawings and paintings currently on display at Armstrong Atlantic State University's Fine Arts Gallery, Stamps presents two distinct bodies of work, each of which reflects her near-obsessive tendency to paint the same subject matter over and over again.

Her "Sea" series features 12 small format paintings and a handful of tiny sketches, all of which focus on the textures and forms that define the New York Harbor. She rode the Staten Island Ferry repeatedly to get a feel for how the flat, gunmetal gray water meets the smoky blue sky.

"I wanted to give the feeling of expansive, wide open spaces," she said. "I decided to bleach them out and make the work super light."

In a signature two-part oil painting titled "Lightning and Flower" which recurs five times in "Luminous Nature," Stamps contrasts the electric geometry of a lightning bolt with the thin, curling petals of a flower, emphasizing the variety of forms in nature. Each painting offers a slightly different representation of the subject matter at hand, with the blossom appearing slightly more wilted or the lightning seeming more explosive in various incarnations.

Flowers serve as a recurring theme in "Luminous Nature," in part because the artist finds refuge from the concrete cityscape of New York in floral still lifes. "Living in the city has inspired me to work with nature even more," she said. "There's so little of it in New York."

Pang-Chieh Hsu, an assistant professor of art at Armstrong Atlantic State University, met Stamps at the University of Massachusetts several years ago and was immediately impressed by her work. He decided to help bring her latest body of drawings and paintings to Savannah.

"She is working on a new direction of abstract realism," Hsu said. "Each painting has its own personality."

Although the paintings in "Luminous Nature" are relatively