

MARC LEAVITT

Studio: 153 High Street, Belfast, ME 04915

Mailing: PO Box 527, Belfast, ME 04915

Telephone: (207) 338-9197

Instagram: marcleavittart; *Facebook:* Marc Leavitt

Website: marcleavitt.com

Email: marcleavitt@earthlink.net

Q&A WITH ERIN LITTLE (erinlittleportfolio.com)

1) Describe your work in three words.

Color. Meditation. Serialism.

2) What was your journey to finding your studio space?

I worked in an unheated ell attached to our old cape in Belfast for five years, moving all my supplies and works into a spare bedroom when the weather turned cold each season. My partner loved his art studio downtown; he convinced me that I needed to get out of the house. Soon enough, I saw a flyer at the Belfast Co-op advertising my current space. I called from the parking lot, saw the studio within an hour, and signed a lease. Fate!

3) How does your space influence your work?

It keeps me organized. I arrange my oil paints in bins by color and keep other categories of supplies similarly stored for easy access. The series I am working on now is 60"x36", which fits easily in the space. It is no problem for me to have diverse visual stimuli and stay focused on work in development. I do take pieces of finished work home for storage when I need more studio space.

4) You had numerous pieces based on words or phrases. Can you tell us more about that?

The *Literalisms* series represents multilayered oil paintings that use meditative actions to move literal text to "pure" abstraction. Stenciled text is drawn in pencil within a grid format. Next, different colors are laid in while keeping the text legible for reading. I then apply oils utilizing a palette knife to complete each abstraction. With all of my series, my goal is to put forth a question, set parameters of control and chance, and see if I am able to create something aesthetically beautiful.

5) Your new series is quite an impressive body of work! Where did that idea come from? They seem so bold and geometric. Especially in comparison to your word series.

I wanted to move my idea of figurative painting forward, with inspiration from diverse artists such as Francis Bacon, Keith Haring, and Jasper Johns. The *Mithuna* series represents a two-year (and ongoing) exploration of gender, nationality, and human sensuality. (*Mithuna*, in Tantric art, refers to couples sculptured in close embrace.) Eight large paintings completed in 2016, as well as 152 oil studies on paper (2014/15), juxtapose bold color, suggested imagery, symbols, and geometric abstraction. Research determines the use of some colors; chance selects others. Color discordance often achieves aesthetic success.

6) What is the best thing you've done for your artistic career?

When I ran a company in Boston, I exhibited and rotated my works in a thematic way. My first dealer asked me "who painted these?" when she visited my office for other business. Responding "I did" led to a conversation about my dedication to art-making, why I work in series, and a business relationship that lasted for seven years. We showed works from my *Flag*, *Picasso's Breasts*, *Lessons of Muso Kokushi (Flowers)*, and *Blah, Blah, Blah* series. Shorter answer: create, create, create!

7) What has been the biggest challenge?

The high cost of materials and gallery representation are the biggest challenges.

8) How have you found being an artist in Maine has affected your work?

I think being a full-time coastal Maine resident has made me a better artist. A more relaxed pace of life dramatically improves my ability to think clearly and create a cohesive body of work. With Facebook, the Internet, and travel I am able to stay connected to the art world. Colby, Bowdoin, and other Maine museums have great exhibitions. Daily life in Belfast demonstrates the incredible kindness of and positive interaction with so many open-minded people. The beauty of our surrounding nature is also important.

9) What's next for you?

My immediate future includes continuation of the *Mithuna* series. I also fill notebooks with ideas, quotes, sketches, etc. Some of these resources may be used for future projects such as geometric abstract landscapes and seascapes, as well as a new approach to text-based works.

10) If you could have dinner with any five artists (dead or alive) who would they be?

I want so many more, but I choose Jean Dubuffet and Paul Klee for daily work practices, Franz Marc for nature and spirituality, Henri Matisse for color, and Joan Miro for mysticism.