

The Activity of Art

BY K.A. LANDING



Karen Weihs, *Creek Rise*

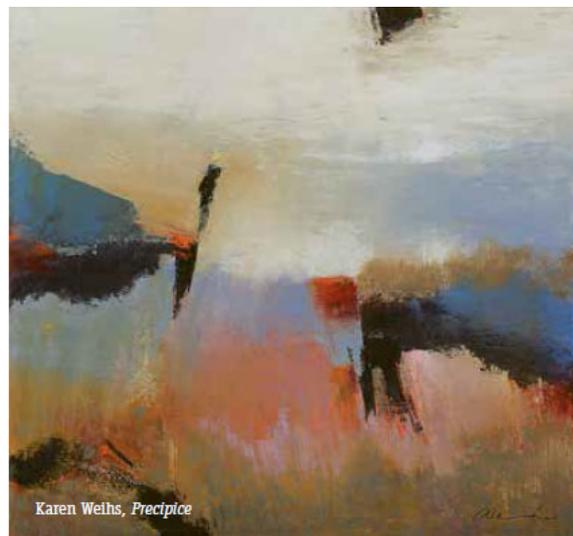
“I am fascinated with the ability of humans to understand what they see. People don’t need everything spelled out for them, they can finish the lines I leave out.”

These are the words of Jeff Jamison, a contemporary impressionist painter represented by Ella Walton Richardson Fine Art. Jamison admits that his works have a slightly unfinished feel to them, provoking viewers to take a closer look. “There is always a bit of mystery,” he continues, and I wonder if this is why he is one of the top-selling artists at Richardson’s gallery and the recipient of an Award of Excellence from the Oil Painters of America National Juried Exhibition. Jamison’s works strike a chord with viewers and encourage them to participate in his art.

A graduate of the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale, Jamison began his career as an illustrator and courtroom sketch artist. As he transitioned to painting, he fused his skills in drawing with learned old master techniques and his own impressionistic creativity. From the way he organizes light into wispy geometric forms to his use of bright colors

to illustrate classic Charleston homes, Jamison evokes romance. As he puts it, “I capture fleeting moments in a simplistic way.” The transience Jamison seeks heightens the experience for viewers, reminding them of sweet moments that have long survived in their memories.

Jamison’s work is on the more contemporary side of what Richardson shows. Her Charleston gallery displays internationally acclaimed artists, many hailing from the Netherlands, Russia and across the United States. Often Richardson curates Jamison’s works with those of Karen Weihs, an abstract artist and Charleston native, who recently traded the sea for the mountains of Cashiers, North Carolina. Whereas Jamison uses figures and familiar city scenes to connect with viewers, Weihs constructs otherworldly, abstract seascapes that challenge our perceptual instinct. Manipulating color into representational forms, she elevates the primitive palette of the Lowcountry. Like Jamison, Weihs’ dreamscapes beckon the viewer to become more than just a voyeur—she invites you into a surreal world to discover what diffused lines and shapes might represent.



Weihs earned her BFA from the University of Georgia and has since received the prestigious Artist of America Award. Her aim is not to capture her surroundings, but the essence therein; what you see in her works are reifications of the intangible elements in nature—the warmth of the sun, the moisture in the air, the time of day. Her technique involves applying thick layers of pigment with a palette knife, spreading color “as a cake decorator would icing,” until she creates the allusion she is after. To finish, Weihs administers thin glazes of diluted pigment with a brush to create a polished effect.

The greatest compliments these artists have received might surprise you. For Jamison, it was a woman who said, “If I close my eyes and open them again, your painting will have vanished.” If we consider Jamison’s mission to capture fleeting moments, perhaps this mysterious pronouncement makes sense. His work is ephemeral—ever-shifting, ever-fading, ever-capturing our attention in a myriad of ways. For Weihs, a man reacted with, “I don’t like abstract art ... but I like your art.” Both Jamison and Weihs create art that is cerebral, yet relatable, allowing them to reach the largest possible audience. In 1890, Leo Tolstoy attempted to answer the infamous question, *What is Art?* in his book by the same name. His finding: “[Art is] to evoke in oneself a feeling one has experienced, and ... then, by means of movements, lines, colors, sounds, or forms expressed in words, so to transmit that feeling—this is the activity of art.” Art is an activity meant to be enjoyed. If we stop to ponder a work for 10 seconds or 10 hours, then its worth is proven.

K.A. Landing is an arts professional and writer living in Mount Pleasant.

Ella Walton Richardson Fine Art
58 Broad St.
Charleston, SC 29401
843-722-3660
ellarichardson.com