

Gallery on State

Peggy Ferris: *When Designers Paint*

By DEVON PETTENGILL / CASA

PEGGY FERRIS HAS ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN ART, and after a successful 20-year career as a graphic designer, she has returned to abstract painting, an art form that captured her attention when she was in college.

Ferris's non-representational paintings take two different forms, the hard-edge form of her acrylic paintings on canvas, and her gestural pieces, created using acrylics and mixed media on synthetic paper or canvas. Ferris' work will be featured at Gallery on State in an exhibit called *When Designers Paint*, from February 7th through March 1st.

Ferris developed her hard-edge style



Untitled, by Peggy Ferris

while studying at the Royal Academy of Art in Holland in the late 1970s. Reminiscent of the NBC peacock logo, hard-edge painting was established during the middle of the 20th Century. Gestural painting is an abstract style in which the paint is applied spontaneously as opposed to in careful strokes.

The difference in the process of creating the two types of paintings is intuitive versus intellectual, Ferris says. "The hard-edge paintings are more planned out, so that is a more linear process. The gestural paintings are like free association: they develop as you go, with no end in mind."

Ferris's gestural paintings are less exact, but like her hard-edge paintings, they are intended to convey moods associated with certain moments, places, and memories.

"My paintings seek to represent any moment along the life/culture/world continuum that is captured or distilled into a single 'snapshot,' where one dominant feeling, mood, or energy is represented," Ferris writes in her artist's statement.

Ferris was born in Los Angeles and studied art and English at UCSB. She received her BFA with honors from the Art Center College of Design. She moved to Santa Barbara in 1983 and started her



Peggy Ferris

freelance graphic design firm, Peggy Ferris Design. In 2000, burned out by graphic design, she decided to paint full time.

The decision came to her spontaneously while she was talking on the phone and doodling in Photoshop. It struck her that the doodle she had created could be a large, 8-foot abstract painting. In a moment, her career as a painter had

begun.

Ferris lets the images emerge from her everyday experiences. "Something comes back up in a painting," she shared, "It happens on a subconscious level."

She finds her inspiration in manufactured, high-energy environments, like big cities. As a result, many verticals and horizontals appear in her painting that do not exist in nature.

Her graphic design experience has made her comfortable with a wide variety of color palettes. Initially, when she started creating hard-edge paintings, she would choose a palette by mixing colors on her computer. More recently, as she paints more gestural pieces than hard-edge pieces, her color choices have been much less pre-planned. Sometimes, she simply picks a pot of paint that has been lying around her studio.

"It forces me to experience the interaction between colors I wouldn't otherwise put together," she shared. "I



Newsletter, by Peggy Ferris

discover new relationships between colors."

Other than her art training at Art Center, Ferris' lack of formal training in abstract art has allowed her freedom of creativity, without the pressure of pre-conceived notions of what abstract art is supposed to be. "I have never been indoctrinated into someone else's way of thinking," she said. "It is very open-ended for me."

Gallery on State is located at 324 State St. Studio D, and is open Thurs-Sat, Noon-5pm and by appointment. A champagne reception will be held from 4-8pm Sat, Feb 9th. For information call 698-2174 or visit www.galleryonstate.com.