



GALLERIES
Unfamiliar terrain

Tati Kaupp is among artists whose works evoke landscapes. The "Winter Series" was inspired by the Southwest. **C8**

“I hate the caucuses. I hate them. They’re fraudulent. They’re undemocratic. You can’t even vote at night.” TV Column, **C4**

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GALLERIES

Natural inspiration, abstract imagination

Klaidman and Kaupp go beyond simple sea and sky in two D.C. shows

BY MARK JENKINS

With the rise of abstract painting, landscapes went out of favor. But that doesn't mean they went away. Whether intentionally or not, the compositions of many abstract canvases evoked landscapes, and some artists intentionally suggested that their work represented, however loosely, traditional views of land, water and sky. One example: The title of the best-known painting by color-field pioneer Helen Frankenthaler, who died Dec. 27, is "Mountains and Sea."

These days, many abstractionists are open about inspiration provided by natural vistas. Kitty Klaidman and Tati Kaupp, whose current shows are in galleries on the same Dupont Circle block, go so far as to identify the regions that informed their latest creations. Yet the paintings' concerns are largely formal; like the first wave of Abstract Expressionists, Klaidman and Kaupp are constructing their own visual vocabularies, not simply executing cryptic variations on traditional landscapes.

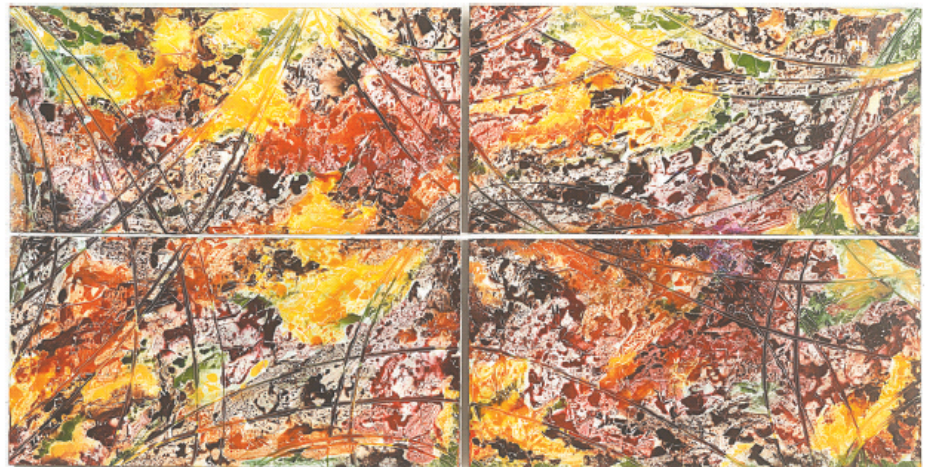
A Czech-born painter who made many European stops on her way to making the District her home, Klaidman has been refining her style since the Abstract Expressionism era; the first show listed on her résumé was in 1966. She's still exploring. The paintings in "Salt Spring Island: Beneath the Surface" were sparked by a visit to that isle, an artists' haven off the coast of mainland British Columbia.

The trip was probably in the fall, since these pictures emphasize autumnal reds and oranges over the green and blue usually associated with the Pacific Northwest. Klaidman writes that the paintings "abstract the richly textured surfaces and sub-surfaces that captured my imagination," an approach that echoes her earlier series.

All the works are mixed media on wood, and most feature multiple panels. Klaidman applied areas of pigment, then incised them to create patterns that generally complement, but occasionally contrast with, the painted forms. The wet-on-wet painting gives the image a liquid quality, which is amplified by glazes that provide a ceramic-like sheen. The scrapings are generally circular, adding to the sense of natural forms. But a few of the panels, all of which are identified only by number, are vigorously cross-hatched with roughly straight lines, and thus look more fierce. They're "action paintings," although with a more refined skin than the 1950s canvases once called that. Klaidman has made multi-panel works in the past, but the "Salt Spring Island" paintings are divided more dramatically, with a tension between the sections. While some of the two-, three- or four-part works merely segment a unified image, others create a focus exactly where the panels meet. These pictures don't just gaze beneath the surface; they stare right into the gaps between things, using slices of nothingness to frame their vivid hues and movements.

'Winter Series'

Like Klaidman's new work, Tati Kaupp's "Winter Series" doesn't use bands of color or texture that might suggest horizon lines. With their teeming



AUTUMN HUES: Kitty Klaidman's "Salt Spring Island #24" drew inspiration from the painter's stay at a British Columbia artists haven.

bubbles and intermittent spirals, the nine large oil paintings could be seen to depict a microscopic world. But they were actually inspired by Kaupp's childhood in Mexico and the American Southwest, with their vast dry expanses. There's no green, as might be expected, but also little tan and brown. Predominantly blue and purple, the canvases evoke the desert not only in winter but also at night.

The numbered paintings are square or slightly rectangular, but not widescreen in the manner of a Western shot in Monument Valley. There is one diptych, whose twinned images make it the most arresting of the lot. Despite not emphasizing the vertical, the canvases have sweep, as well as a moodiness that comes from the midnight palate. The imagery is loosely painted yet detailed, combining a buzz of pictorial activity with broader compositional elements. In other words, the pictures look good

both up close and from a distance.

Alongside the "Winter Series," Kaupp is also showing four smaller watercolors from her "Wedding Series." These are brighter and more open, and include bubbles like those in the wintry suite. The daubed dots are not enigmatic in this context, though. The strategically placed champagne glasses clearly indicate where the buoyant circles originated.

'Haitian Art'

For a more traditional approach to landscape, among other subjects, the Watergate Gallery is presenting work from Port-au-Prince's Rainbow Gallery. The owners of that business were killed in the 2010 earthquake, as was one of the artists represented in the show. Yet there are no depictions of catastrophe in "Haitian Art." With a few exceptions, the paintings are sunny, sometimes in the manner of can-

vases meant for tourists who just want a colorful souvenir.

More interesting are the canvases in the folk-art tradition and those that emulate early 20th-century modernism, mostly of the French persuasion. These are notable less for their images of pink flamingos and multi-hued fruits, vegetables and fabrics than for their assured simplicity; they reduce the subjects to blocks of Matisse-like color, often arranged in boldly vertical compositions.

The idealized views can be politically charged. Jean Adrien Seide, who no longer lives in Haiti, paints visions of a verdant land he knows no longer exists. (Deforestation, not the earthquake, is his nemesis.) Pictures that portray voodoo gods and priestesses show a strong African influence and a less easygoing disposition. One piece by Stevenson Magloire — killed by Haitian paramilitary troops in 1994, when he was 31 — is closer to

Keith Haring than tourist art. Its beauty is not pretty, but it lingers after the gentler works' appeal has evaporated.

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SALT SPRING ISLAND: BENEATH THE SURFACE
 on view through Jan. 21 at Marsha Mateyka Gallery, 2012 R St. NW, 202-338-0088; www.marshamateykgallery.com.

WINTER SERIES
 on view through Jan. 28 at Cross MacKenzie Gallery, 2026 R St. NW, 202-338-7970; www.crossmckenzie.com.

HAITIAN ART
 on view through Jan. 28 at Watergate Gallery, 2552 Virginia Ave. NW, 202-338-4488; www.watergategallery@amedesign.com.