



Elena Madden Studio Gallery

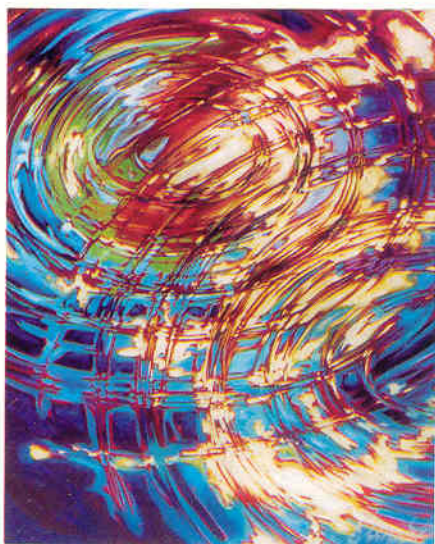
Water, always intriguing, always changing, always an emotional interpretation.

Elena Madden, at her gallery on Whitaker Street in downtown Savannah, stimulates response to her interpretations of water through four series in which she explores her favorite of all topics.

After painting from life for five years, now, "I paint strictly from memory," Elena says, explaining that she never tires of the subject. "I love the water, but I wanted something more than the typical cliché." Elena's water churns and swirls (her memories of a pebble tossed in a lake). It reflects. It flows. It is colorful and blended, evokes emotional response. And her water, captured on panel board, in the viewer's eye, also rests.

"Water has always been a part of me", from her earliest years growing up near Columbia, through her time in Savannah. (She has a degree in painting from SCAD, 1993, and moved back 2 years ago.)

Her success here is "beyond my



"Sky Glow" - 36 x 36 oil Panel

expectations," she said. "Savannah is a beautiful city. It is visually inspiring."

Starting with a solid magenta background—Elena's first impression when she watches a wave's crescendo—she then creates tension and movement with other colors. For water she prefers the slicker panel board to a more textured, more customary artist's canvas. She builds her work into an intense light—sunlight, or moonlight, or the reflected light of the cityscape. The result is a constantly moving water, open to the range of the individual viewer's emotions and not unlike the tensions a Mark Rothko painting might evoke.

Sometimes her work will have an obvious horizon line, but, she explains, reflections are more intimate in the water without the horizon. She captures both.

Elena gives a quick lesson in art tradition: Western philosophy is to copy what you see. The eastern philosophy is to paint from memory and to interpret what you see.

Some of her work is monumental—7 x 9 foot public pieces she has completed on commission (for the South Carolina Convention Center in Columbia, for the Jacksonville Port Authority and the Jaguars' Alltel Stadium, for Savannah's Memorial Medical Center). Others, more traditional in size, are designed for private display.

At her Whitaker Street studio, Elena is exhibiting her four interpretations of water: the horizon series, the ring series (some of her earliest discoveries of water), the river series (with a natural pure reflection of trees) and city lights series.

Elena says for her an experience becomes an emotional and liberating




"Gold Moon Blue City" 36 x 60 oil

release that stays with her. As she paints from memory it becomes more vivid and abstract. "When an artist knows that's what she should paint, it is always new. It always stays fresh."

And energetic, but calming, muted, but vibrant, dark and deep, but light and bright. And constantly changing.

There are several other artists represented at Elena Madden. Samuel J. Ward, a contemporary artist whose technique is to manipulate the paint instead of using a brush, Carter Seibels, of Charleston, a designer of hand blown glass jewelry, and a figurative painter, Hayley Gaberlauege.

Elena Madden Gallery and Studio is at 417 Whitaker Street (at Taylor Street). Hours are 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Elena's work, represented in 10 galleries around the country from Florida to California, can also be viewed at www.elenamadden.com 

By Jane Kahn