

THE ART OF LOVE



Local artist Milisa Valliere paints musically-inspired passion

BY E.L. MARCUS

Most are familiar with music's power to transport the listener to another time and place. Milisa Valliere hopes to do the same through her richly textured abstract paintings. In the past, she painted with an impressionistic flair, but as she's matured, she's found that she "want[s] to do less and feel more." Valliere wields her oils with a knife and an open heart.

Two different collections of her work will be shown in Columbus this month: *Love as a Flower*, inspired by her reunion with her husband after a lengthy work-related separation, and *Haiti*, a series based on the island's recent earthquakes. Amazingly, both collections were completed within a single night to the accompaniment of a few well-chosen CDs.

"I like to think that there are some pieces of music that are undeniable," she says. "You would feel the same emotions no matter who you are."

With the sole criteria of "universality," Valliere charges her husband Roland (president of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra), with the task of finding her music that conveys emotion. "I try to embed the music within the painting," she says.

Not only does she gain inspiration from her husband – she is equally inspiring to him.

"She's a constant student," he said. "She sees everything."

Things haven't always been so easy for the pair. When her husband accepted his position with the CSO, Valliere stayed behind in their native Kansas City, Kansas, reluctant to leave everything behind. "I've never felt further away from him," she sighed.

Ten months passed before Valliere decided to rejoin her husband in Ohio.

"We went on a trip to Key West," she said. "We were dancing at night near these fountains, and seeing this long-stemmed, tropical plant, back-lit against the fountains . . . it was just such a powerful image in my mind, [coupled with] the feeling of love that I had at that moment."

Her painting "Love as a Flower" is a direct interpretation of that moment: an embodiment of the full circle of brokenness, reconciliation and forgiveness.

"These are the things you need to go through if you want to be one of those couples who are together for sixty years," she continued. "Love makes everything okay. It's the best thing I've ever experienced."

Shortly thereafter, Valliere recalls awakening at 3 a.m. to rush to her studio to paint, accompanied by a stack of CDs. At around noon, the music had ended and all of the paintings,

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finished. For her, the songs that accompany her paintings are almost as important as the pieces themselves. "My hope is that soon, I'll be able to display my paintings in a gallery and have people actually be able to listen to the song I used, as they're viewing the painting."

But foremost, Valliere wants the viewer to fall in love.

"I have always wanted to make art that made people stop and think about love," she said. "They don't even need to know I made it. I just want them to think about love." ■

Milisa Valliere's work can be viewed online at www.mvalliere.com. Her Haiti series will be on display at the Hammond Hawkins Gallery (2264 East Main St., Bexley) throughout December. All proceeds will benefit a Haitian female artist. Ms. Valliere's Love as a Flower will also be on display through December 31st at Barcelona Restaurant (263 E Whittier St., German Village).

PHOTO BY CHRIS CASELLA