

ARTIST HANNA EMRICH

# Paper Moods

CREATING RHYTHM AND RELATIONSHIPS  
BY DONNA CEDAR-SOUTHWORTH



*"I fail all the time and I learn. I'm very positive about it. I say 'good for you for trying!' Because you would never learn any other way than by failing."*

—Hanna Emrich

*"Moods at the Club," mixed media and collage, 16" x 20"*

"I can't use the word 'spontaneous' enough," says collage/mixed media artist Hanna Emrich when describing her work and her artistic process. After 37 years of painting representational still lifes in oil, in 2007 the McLean artist ventured into abstract expressionism with collage and mixed media. She became thrilled with using a new medium altogether, finding inspiration in the tactile appeal of papers—all kinds of papers—textured, colored, handmade, decorative, rice papers, magazine tear sheets. Papers fed her imagination and offered a new way for Hanna to express emotion and to let her work be completely spontaneous.

"Rather than controlling a painting medium, I now interact with the materials and let them lead me. Most often my pieces address the essence of ideas taken from nature or music, breaking down the familiar and expressing my artistic vision," she says. Almost a decade after her departure from representational work, Hanna is still infinitely intrigued with papers and the creativity they afford her, and she often incorporates found objects and other media into her work.

"The use of textured and magazine papers, pastels, acrylic paints and found objects offers exponentially broader design possibilities and inspiration," she says when comparing her abstracts to her representational work. So when looking at a simple rice paper or a routine magazine ad, Hanna sees beyond the surface into a kaleidoscope of colors and design possibilities for her to explore and take to new levels. "I will respond to a piece of paper or a magazine ad and immediately see new directions."

Any kind of paper is fair game for her to experiment with, as she often paints the fronts and backs of these papers, cuts them into squares, and arranges them intuitively to create explosive, colorful, moody collages. While exploring the paper medium, she was delighted to discover the backs of these textured papers often create entirely different, yet complimentary, surfaces to the fronts of these papers when painted and juxtaposed next to each other, almost creating their own "yin and yang" effect.





*“I would like viewers to look at my work and to see things differently... that art is very dynamic and there’s a life going on underneath. I would hope viewers could come away empowered or opened to different art.”*

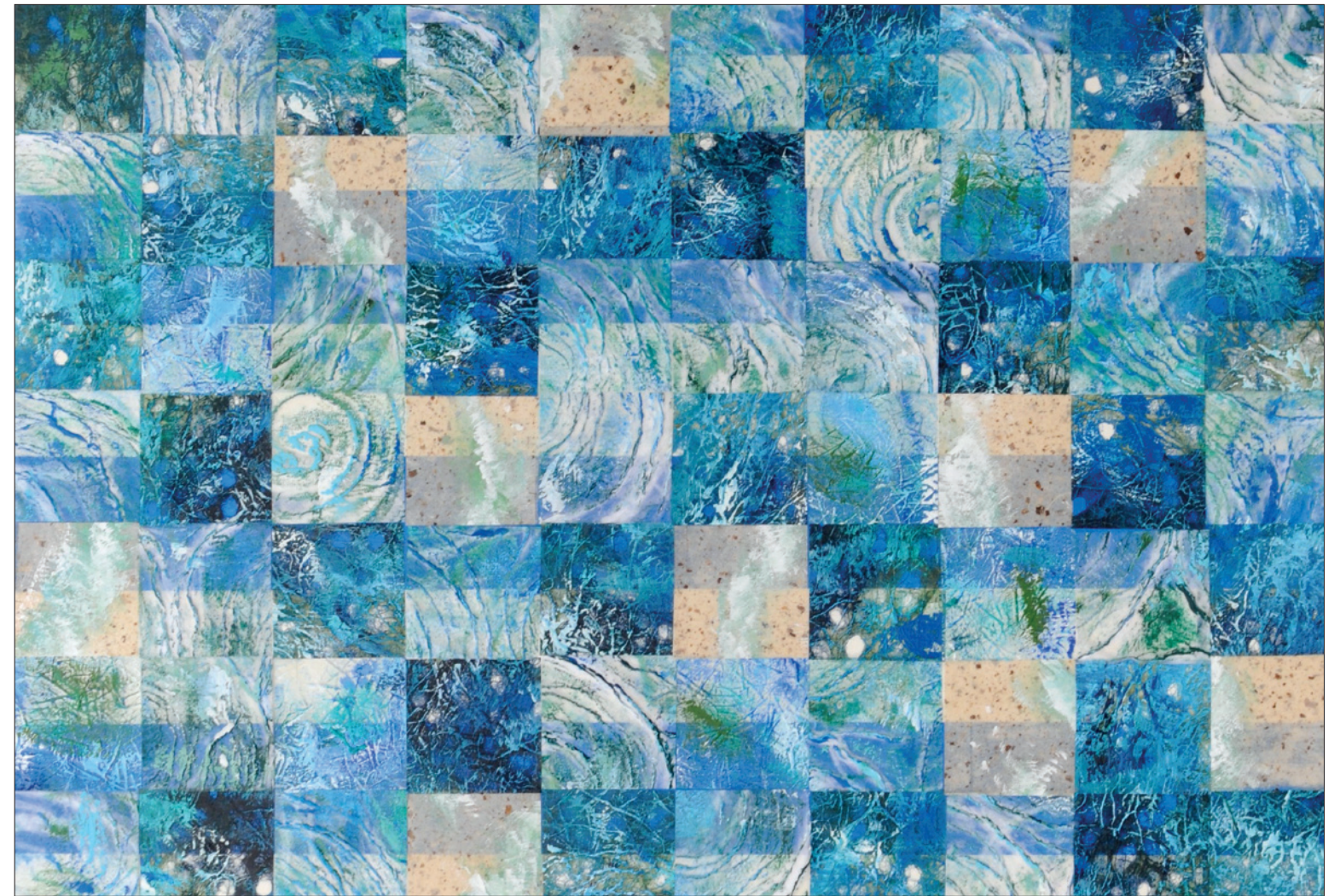
—Hanna Emrich



While she started with artist’s papers such as rice papers and hand-made papers, she soon found that magazine ads, particularly perfume ads, fashion ads, black-and-white ads and bourbon and scotch ads offered her unique, ready-made color palettes from which to work. She had been flipping through a fashion magazine and the cool blue color palette for a perfume ad for Angel caught her eye. “I got 15 copies of this magazine and cut out the parts of the ad that interested me, arranged them from light to dark, crumpled them up and just melded them together.”

She uses a matte medium to glue the pieces down and lightly paints them with a fan brush, hitting just the contours, which she says unifies the piece. Once complete, she finishes the work with a gloss medium.

“The pieces create rhythm and relationships that take on their own life,” she says. She’s greatly inspired by music, and many of her pieces such as “Mozart,” “Sonata” and “Moods at the Club” reflect the moods the music evokes in her. One of her music-inspired pieces was juried into a show at the McLean Project for the Arts’ Ramp Gallery, and Hanna was flattered with the comments of juror Peter Ulrich: “The work explodes like a Fourth of July show where all of the fireworks go off at the same time. ...I felt something akin to being



Above: “Surf, Sea, Sand,” mixed media and collage, 16” x 20”; and “Flow (right side),” mixed media and collage, 12” x 18”

Opposite, top: “Cadence,” collage, 11” x 14”; and “Stormy Sea (right side),” mixed media and collage, 18” x 24”



visually out of breath while viewing it. Wow!” he wrote.

Hanna studied under artists Marise Riddell and Sharon Fishel through the Corcoran School of Art and Design, and credits them with welcoming her into the world of abstraction. She is an active member in the McLean Art Society and the Vienna Arts Society and, through them, she shows her work regularly. “I would like viewers to look at my work and to see things differently...that art is very dynamic and there’s a life going on underneath. I would hope viewers could come away empowered or opened to different art.”

Hanna is now experimenting with making her own base papers from the clay-coated pages of *National Geographic* magazines and applying a solvent to the papers which offers her new, more subdued color palettes and heavier papers. She plans to embark on a body of work revolving around them.

Hanna describes her work as “playful. ...I’ve taken some risks. I give myself a lot of permission to experiment and to fail, as well as permission to be pleased when I’ve done something well. I fail all the time and I learn. I’m very positive about it. I say ‘good for you for trying!’ Because you would never learn any other way than by failing.”

www.hzemrich.com | hzemrich@hotmail.com.