

IN COLOUR



Sara McIntosh, *Synthesis*, 2006, Acrylic On Canvas 37.5" x 29"

ELEANOR "ELLY" MACKEY

Elly has been a painter all her life while being a wife, a mother of 5, a teacher and while pursuing other creative activities. As the family moved around Ontario with her educator husband she took courses and became involved locally. Her highly respected representational work led to a secondary school teaching position after her graduation from Toronto Teachers' College. When she took a three-year art course at the New School of Art in Toronto her work radically changed. Influenced by some of the most innovative Toronto artists as teachers

she began to paint large colour field abstracts. She was involved in several exhibitions and was one of the few women to exhibit at the Isaac's Gallery in Toronto. She also had several commissions. Over the years she took university courses and received grants to teach art in secondary schools. While in Sudbury she had a solo exhibition and lectured at Cambrian College and Laurentian University on occasion. After a hiatus from exhibiting and while pursuing other creative interests she has recently had four solo shows before this Kennedy event and is enjoying being involved in the art community again.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I paint to enjoy the sensuous exploration into non-objective painterly pictorial spaces. The flow and density of the paint; the patterning of lines, edges, shapes, forms, and colours; the processes of staining, pouring, and brushing; the opacity, the matte or glossy surface - all point to the tactile reality of the materials and the logical authenticity of the painting process. These qualities impact the senses.

SARA MCINTOSH

Sara McIntosh was born in London, Ontario in 1971 and was raised in North Bay, Ontario. She attended Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario where she earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree and graduated in 1995. Sara's adventurous spirit led her to the vibrant arts scene in Seattle where she lived for two years. In March of 2002 Sara did the Landmark Forum and this program catapulted her into a higher level of productivity and commitment. From 2002-2004 Sara participated in a weekly abstract critique group with mentor Bill Porteous and had 3 Solo

Exhibitions. Sara fell in love with Denis Robichaud in the summer of 2004 and moved to Surrey, BC to live with him and create her art career in the Vancouver Area. They are now married and living in Langley, BC. She currently designs and instructs classes and workshops at the Surrey Art Gallery, teaches private lessons and courses and paints in her studio. Sara is represented in Victoria, BC at the Fran Willis Gallery www.franwillis.com, in Calgary at the Axis Gallery in Art Central www.axisart.ca, in Kelowna at Sopa Fine Arts www.sopafinearts.com and in Montreal at the Gora Gallery www.gallerygora.com.

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

"While sometimes my experience painting can be clear from start to finish, often times I am doubtful and afraid. Despite my uncertainty, I boldly embrace the unknown. It is this risk that thrills me and reveals an authentic expression of my creative evolution."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The artists would like to acknowledge and thank the following individuals and groups for their assistance, expertise and encouragement. This exhibition and publication would not have been possible without them.

We would like to thank Denis Robichaud and Doug Mackey for being with us throughout the making of this show and right up to the opening celebration. Sara would like to thank Denis for his continuing ingenuity and his generous heart. Elly would like Doug for his contagious, unstoppable energy and unwavering support.

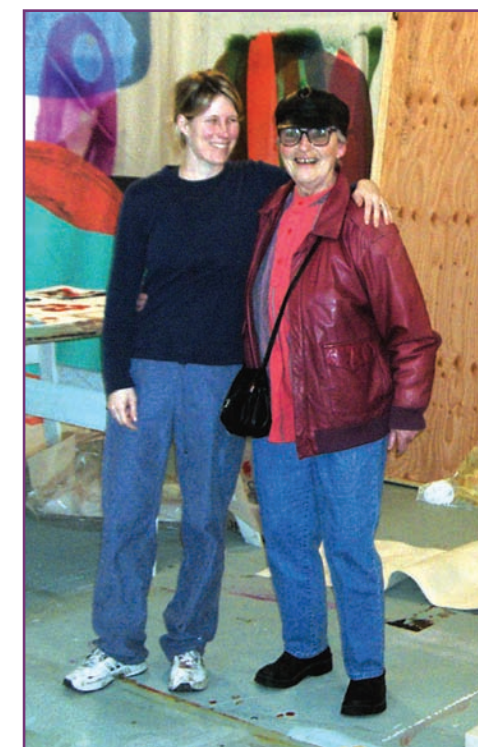
Our families have been extremely engaged with this exhibit but in particular we would like to acknowledge, Elly's son, Paul Mackey for his help with the production of the exhibition video document.

Christopher Régimbal, helped with the organization of the exhibition and the accompanying publication. We appreciate the time he took to research our artwork and the contemporary art traditions that underpin this exhibition.

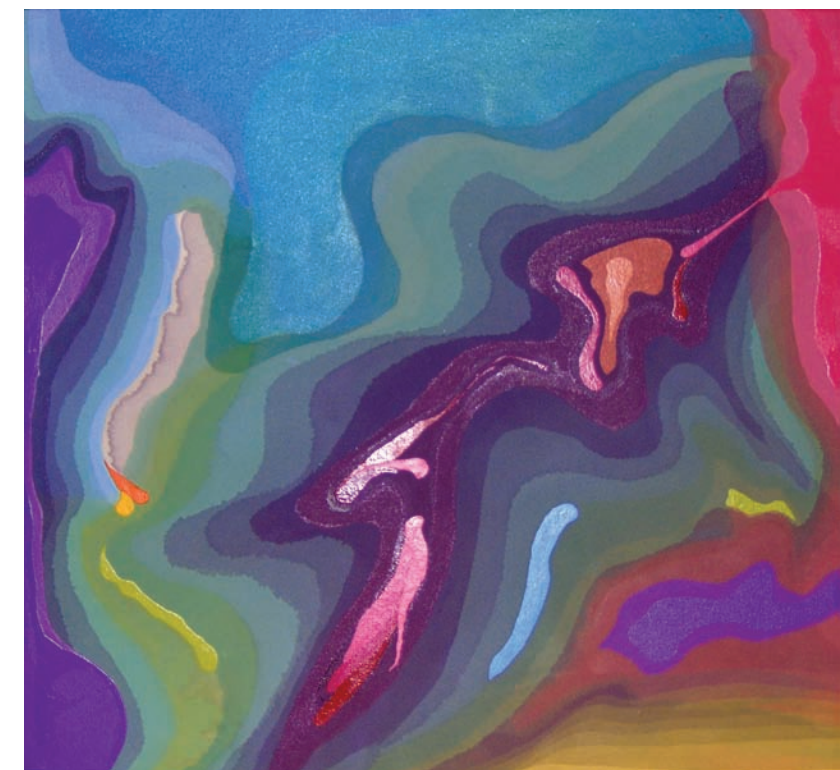
We would also like to thank Dermot Wilson, Curator for the exhibit, for his encouragement

and especially for igniting our imaginations when he came up with the show title, Conversations in Colour. We are grateful to Raymond Brand for his design expertise in creating this exhibition brochure.

Finally, we must thank our friends in the arts community, for the interest and continuing involvement of Nipissing University's art department and Sara's students back in Langley who helped with the preparation of stretchers for this show.



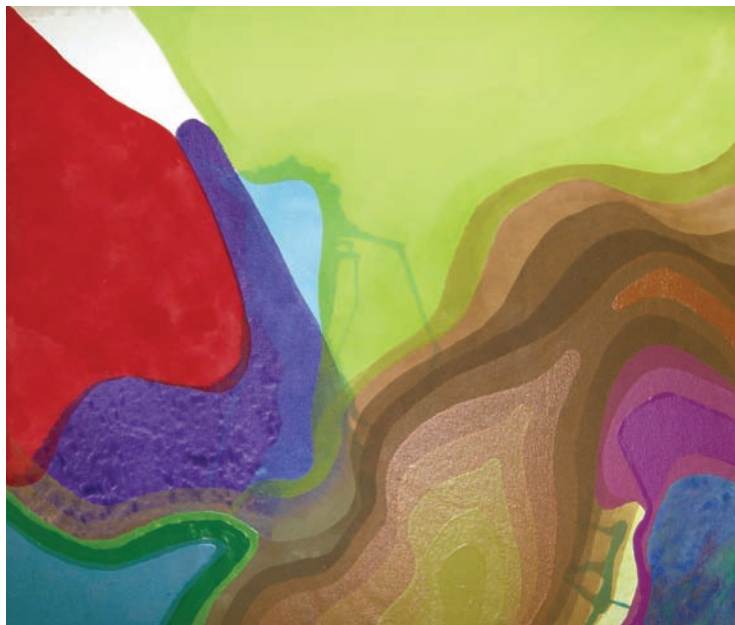
CONVERSATIONS



Eleanor Mackey, *Emerging*, 2006, Acrylic On Canvas, 39" x 41"



Eleanor Mackey, *Frolicking*, 2006, Acrylic On Canvas, 30" x 48"



Eleanor Mackey, *Surprising*, 2006, Acrylic On Canvas, 38" x 45"

CONVERSATIONS IN COLOUR: TWO GENERATIONS OF COLOUR FIELD PAINTING IN CANADA ELEANOR MACKEY & SARA MCINTOSH

In 1967 the American colourist Jules Olitski wrote: "Painting is made from inside out. I think of painting as possessed by a structure born of the flow of color feeling. Color *in* color is felt at any and every place of the pictorial organization; in its immediacy – its particularity. Color must be felt throughout"¹.

This exhibition is the outcome of the meeting of two generations of non-representational artists in North Bay and the product of an intense year of collaboration between the two. Over the past year Eleanor Mackey and Sara McIntosh have exchanged letters, paintings and phone calls, crossed the country and visited each other's studios, and collaborated on canvases in preparation for their two-person show, *Conversations in Colour* at the WKP Kennedy Gallery.

Non-representational painting was a major force in the world art markets from the mid-1940's until the end of the 1960's and has a particularly rich history in Canada. Today, new generations of abstract painters such as McIntosh are dealing with the same questions raised by Mackey's generation in the 1960's. Armed with a new set of aesthetic principles and advancements in materials such as paints and glazes, they are looking back to the heyday of post painterly abstraction to carry on their visual and conceptual conversations.

I don't mean to present a complete history of non-representational painting, but I would like to outline some historical events that may have led directly or indirectly to the realization of the work in this exhibition and to the development of abstract painting in Canada.

I will start in Toronto in 1954 with the formation of the short lived group of abstract painters, Painters Eleven. Jack Bush, William Ronald and Harold Town counted among the eleven who strategically picked their name in reference to the Group of Seven. While abstract painting already had a strong history in French Canada beginning in the late 1940's, Painters Eleven helped to elevate non-representational painting to national significance in an English Canada that was largely dominated by landscapes. In 1956 the group was included in the American Abstract Artists' Exhibition in New York, effectively bringing Canadian abstraction to the United States; William Ronald was for a short time represented by the prestigious Kootz Gallery in NYC. The following year the influential American art critic, Clement Greenburg, visited their studios in Toronto and started a relationship with Canadian abstraction that would last a decade.

In 1961 the Isaacs Gallery moved its location to 832 Young Street in the heart of Yorkville in Toronto. Isaacs was one of several commercial galleries in Toronto that were dedicated to presenting the new Canadian avant-garde. The gallery quickly became the centre of the Toronto art scene, representing the likes of Michael Snow, Greg Curnoe, Jack Chambers and Joyce Wieland. William Ronald was represented by the Isaacs Gallery in the late 1950's; one of his pieces, *Karma*, was Isaacs first major sale.

In 1964 Clement Greenburg curated the landmark exhibition *Post Painterly Abstraction*, which included Jack Bush as well as Regina artists Arthur McKay and Kenneth Lockhead, who Greenburg met while leading the Emma Lake

workshops in 1962. Greenburg argued that artists such as Bush, and Americans Jules Olitski, Kenneth Nowland, Helen Frankenthaler, and Frank Stella represented a new generation of Colour Field painters; a style that was distinctly North American and characterized by 'openness' and 'clarity' in colour composition². The exhibition traveled to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis, and the Art Gallery of Ontario.

In 1967, 35 year old Eleanor Mackey graduated from the New School of Art in Toronto where she studied under the likes of Denis Burton, Robert Markle, and Robert Hedrick. She participated in the New School graduate exhibition at the William Morris Gallery displaying strongly original Colour Field paintings. Around this time one of her teachers brought Av Isaacs to her Queen Street West studio to view her new work and he immediately set up a solo exhibition for her early in 1968. The exhibition was a sellout success and Mackey quickly became one of the most important artists to show in Toronto that year. She appeared in a photograph beside Jack Bush in the *Globe and Mail* as a 'trend setter from 1968'³. As a result of the exhibition Mackey received several commissions, including one for a 26 foot mural in a Scarborough Post Office.

After a ten year break from exhibiting, Mackey had a solo exhibition at the Laurentian University Museum & Art Centre in Sudbury in 1979. The work in the exhibition was concerned with colour, light, form, space, and texture, in line with the work she had been doing since the mid-1960's as well as the tenants of post painterly abstraction.

On the other side of the country, the American abstract painter Bill Porteous moved to Victoria, British Columbia from Hermosa Beach California and helped to found the Victoria College of Art in 1975. Porteous apprenticed under Andrew Fagan and Willie Suzuki, and studied at the Otis Institute of Fine Art in California before making Canada his home. Influenced by Colour Field artists such as Robert Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, and Kenneth Noland, Porteous would go on to influence a generation of west coast abstract painters such as Sara McIntosh from his private studio in Victoria.

Sara McIntosh grew up in North Bay, Ontario in the 1970's and 1980's and took classes from photo-realist painter Bruce St. Clair while still in high school. She attended Queens University in Kingston Ontario and found a department heavily influenced by abstract expressionism. At Queens she studied under Jan Winton and developed a style that mixed abstraction and representational painting before graduating in 1995. She returned to North Bay for a year after university and worked with artists, Andrew Van Schie and Liz Lott before heading west to Seattle and Victoria.

In 2000 Mackey began exhibiting again after a long hiatus and subsequently had 4 solo exhibitions including one at the White Water Gallery in North Bay. Her work was well received and she quickly became an active member of the art community. In 2005, she delivered an artist talk entitled *Driven to Abstraction* at the WKP Kennedy Gallery.

McIntosh participated in weekly painting critiques with Bill Porteous at his studio in Victoria from 2002 to 2004. Porteous encouraged McIntosh to drop the last bits of representational elements from her work so that she could concentrate on moving completely into abstraction. She adopted a style concerned with colour, sheen, and shape and moved toward larger canvases much as artists like Ronald and Mackey did in the 1950's and 60's. She

moved to Langley, BC, outside of Vancouver and mounted 4 solo exhibitions in Victoria, Montreal, Calgary and Kelowna. She also participated in several group exhibitions around this time and began taking on students of her own.

Demonstrating a renewed interest in the Colour Field work of the 1960's and the impact that it had on successive generations, the Art Gallery of Ontario mounted a major exhibition entitled *The Shape of Colour* in the summer of 2005.

That same summer, McIntosh visited Mackey's studio in Chisholm Township, Ontario to begin the year long process of preparing for this exhibition. In January 2006, Mackey visited McIntosh in Montreal at her solo exhibition at Gallery Gora at which time the two continued their discussion on painting. Mackey then visited McIntosh's studio in Langley, BC in March at which time they collaborated on a number of canvases, some of which are included in this exhibition. Throughout this process, both artists exchanged ideas and experiences and learned from each other.

Even though they come from two different generations, and the context for their work is worlds apart, both artists have produced canvases that speak to each other across these barriers through the immediacy and supremacy of colour organization. McIntosh's large scale canvases are achieved through spontaneity and chance as well as control and deliberation. Mackey's canvases display stronger attention to all over composition and subtlety of colour variation, but demonstrate moments of impulsiveness attributed to action painting. Their work, in the words of Olitski, is 'born of the flow of color feeling'; the direction that the artists take their work after its common birth is what makes their art distinct. This event affords a unique opportunity for the community of North Bay to view the first major local exhibition of works by these two painters. It was also an opportunity for these two women to learn from each other and grow as artists through the act of collaboration.

— Christopher Régimbal, Projects Coordinator,
WKP Kennedy Gallery

¹ Jules Olitski, *Painting in Color*, Artforum, New York, January 1967, p. 20

² Clement Greenburg, *Post Painterly Abstraction*, Exhibition Catalogue, 1964

³ Kay Krizwiser, *Trend Setters From 1968*, *The Globe and Mail*, Sat., Dec. 28 1968



Eleanor Mackey & Sara McIntosh
Colour Collusion #1, 2006,
Acrylic On Canvas, 35" x 39"



Sara McIntosh, *Skywards*, 2006, Acrylic On Canvas, 38" x 96"



Sara McIntosh, *Rising Sign*, 2006, Acrylic On Canvas, 92" x 48"