

“Artist Kathryn Macnaughton’s Evolution of the Female Form”
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“I don’t do much illustration anymore,” says Toronto-based artist Kathryn Macnaughton, “I think I was always a painter.” In 2007, fresh out of the Ontario College of Art and Design she was an illustrator creating digital illustrations for fashion magazines and producing mixed-media collages featuring the naked figures from Playboy magazines. Now, she paints large, colourful abstract shapes inspired by the female form.

“I really love the compositions of the images in the Playboy magazines, I see them as graphic shapes for my paintings. I use them for reference but way less then a couple of years ago,” she says. “The colour palettes from those magazines are also really inspiring.”

In Kathryn’s latest exhibition “Dualities: A Bridge Between Two Worlds” at Bau-Xi Gallery in Vancouver, her acrylic paintings, informed by collage, feature solid shapes of colour – predominately in nude, peach and pink – with straight and curved edges (as if the elements were cutout and pasted onto the canvas). The backdrop plays with texture and transparency, as colours softly blend together.



“It’s a two person show with artist, Erin Armstrong,” says Kathryn. “It highlights both of us as emerging, abstract artists whose practice has a great concern for the body. Erin’s work incorporates anonymous figures inhabited in a world of speculative fiction while my works are suggestive figurative shapes in an organic abstract environment.”

Her work is on display at Bau-Xi Gallery Vancouver until July 22, 2017, however, Toronto locals can check out her latest work in the new Dundas West boutique Ease – she’s taken over an entire wall with her bright figurative shapes – or catch her installation in Montreal at Osheaga.

You come from a family of artists. How has your family shaped your work?

When you are surrounded by art and art lovers you begin to pick it up. My brother and my grandmother painted, so it was always around me. My dad was also creative. He was an interior architect, but he always loved drawing and painting. He also taught at OCAD. As a child, my parents would put me in art camps and art classes on the weekend. There was a lot of support for my creativity.

You studied at OCAD too! Do you think education is important as an artist or do you think it has the ability to hinder creativity?

School is important for people that need structure and guidance. I think taking Illustration really helped me to become a better painter – I’m glad that I didn’t take Fine Art in university. I’m a pretty self sufficient person so who knows, maybe I would have had the capability to do it on my own! I’ve been thinking a lot about going to grad school but I am worried that it will hinder my creativity and I’ll start to overthink things!



Your work has evolved a lot in the last few years, moving from illustration to larger abstract acrylic paintings. How do you view this evolution?

When I realized I could make a living by being a painter, I abandoned illustration. Illustration just seemed like the more responsible road to take. There are elements of my illustration work in my paintings – graphic shapes and scribbles – that were definitely something I was using in my illustration work.

What direction do you aspire to take your work in?

It seems to be getting more abstract and minimal. I'm beginning to take more elements away. I'd really love to do some sculptural work as well.

What's inspiring your abstract work?

The things that are really inspiring me right now are everyday observations such as textured walls that I discover on my walk home.

What other artists have influenced your work?

Helen Frankenthaler
Robert Rauschenberg
Cy Twombly
David Hockney
Matisse
Betty Woodman

To take your mind elsewhere while painting, you listen to Podcasts. What Podcasts are currently playing in your studio?

Invisiblia

Fresh air

This American Life

Embedded

Death sex money

Radio Lab

There's this new one called Nancy that I really love.

Any other exhibitions planned?

I'll be doing an installation at Osheaga in Montreal in August.