

Art of the Abstract this July in WNC



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July's Cover Artist—Cindy Walton

The Glory of God in the abstract — a conversation with artist Cindy Walton

BY DENNIS RAY • RIVER ARTS DISTRICT, ASHEVILLE

Rapid River Magazine: What has drawn (no pun intended) you to creating abstract art?

Cindy Walton: In the past, I painted in a more realistic, still-life, or figurative style. I have been to art school twice, and I know the fundamentals. I found in time I wanted to say more and speak to my audience at a more emotional level than a literal rendering. I'm not saying there is anything wrong with any style of painting, but I need to break the lines of realistic painting, to see and expose those bottom layers. I felt abstraction was a way to progress from where I was to where I wanted my work to grow and mature. It was an obvious choice for me, but there are a lot of challenges in painting abstractly.

RRM: What artists have had the most considerable influence over your work and career as an artist?



Cindy Walton

and career. My first inspiration in college was Georgia O'Keeffe of the 20th century. She was



"Creation," 36x36, oil and cold wax on panel by Cindy Walton

CW: At different stages in my life, there have been many artists, either professors or art masters, who have influenced my work

the first living female artist I can remember, and saying to myself, "If she can do this, so can I."

Now I was young, and the world is not that black and white, but it was exciting for me. I saw her work as really looking beyond the apparent landscape and looking deeper below the surface. Her influence is still with me to the point I have traveled to Ghost Ranch in Northern New Mexico and led abstract workshops.

There are others as well: John Singer Sargent, Joan Mitchell, Willem DeKooning, Lucian Freud,

Susan Rothenberg and on and on. They are what I call some of the "Rock Star" artists of their time. These painters did something extraordinary with paint, and for me, the paint is the beginning of it all: how to move it to communicate drama or emotion of my subject, which typically is nature-based. I look toward the wonderful, exciting environments I have experienced in my lifetime – mountains,



"Garden view 2," 24x24 oil and cold wax on panel by Cindy Walton

deserts, and sea.

RRM: Tell us a little about your working schedule?



"Flow 3," 12x12, oil and cold wax on panel by Cindy Walton

CW: My work schedule might surprise many of your readers. As a professional artist, I spend a good part of my time taking care of the communication with others, such as writing this article, as well as managing the business side. Early in my career, I seemed to have painted a lot more than I do now. I paint 3-4 days a week and "communicate" with the world two days a week. My best advice to any creative person is "you have to show up for something to happen."

RRM: Where do you find inspiration to be as productive as you have been?

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CW: I love painting. Don't get me wrong it is not always easy, and I do get artist block, but I find if I show up to work consistently, things happen. This discipline to keep showing up at the studio, and my desire to paint are gifts from God. I know that someday I would stop if not for my faith. I know in my heart and mind that my paintings are for His glory; when I focus on why I am painting all the negative falls away, and I can move ahead.

RRM: At what point in your life did you decide to be an artist, and was that a difficult decision?

CW: I have always wanted to be a professional artist. I was just not sure where to begin, and I did not have the confidence to call myself an artist. In my late 30's, I went back to art school to develop more mature skills and gain the confidence to begin my career. I don't think everyone

must follow this path. I found I needed the structure and confidence this time gave me to find my voice as a painter. I am an artist.

**Cindy Walton**

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