

Going Way Beyond Comfort Zone

by Anne Rudder

The multi-talented formidable painter, Dellamarie Parrilli, has given us bold exemplars of her great expressive heart in the exhibit, *Up Close and Colorful*, now viewing on line through Cross Contemporary Partners, until October 2021. Computer technology allows virtual witnessing of this forceful display in this time of unending malaise and I am grateful for the opportunity to remotely view it despite the show title asserting intimacy.

Parrilli exulted in her budding music and dance life, but her promising career as an entertainer was cruelly curtailed by an autoimmune disease, her singing voice vanishing as a result. This was tragic, for when the malady struck, she had been formulating a one woman Broadway show about Judy Garland and then, in the face of this daunting situation, she had to find a new creative outlet, as she could no longer perform. Her Great White Way Dreams dimmed into the past.

But, the lights did not extinguish because she was a fighter repeatedly transcending serious setbacks in life; she picked up a brush and palette knife and without training, knowledge of painters, or preliminary sketches, began painting forceful abstract expressionist canvases in the studio, intimating the works of de Kooning, Pollock, Mitchell and other giants of this explosive genre, without knowing who they were. She connected with unvarnished feelings, as testaments to boundless emotion and statement of survival, as she made them accessible by intuitively moving paint on canvas surfaces—brush and knife singing, dancing, skipping, squiggling and sweeping bright colors across the picture planes. Paint was her new shield against hindrances as she discovered she could realize pieces of originality and power in this new way of communicating, taking viewers



“This Girl is On Fire”

through forceful visual journeys from her inner life.

Not only are her pieces remarkable, but the titles she gives them are highly descriptive. One of the first art works greeting the viewer upon entering is *Joyfully Unhinged*, a painting where white amorphous forms wiggle like paramecium under a microscope, floating crazily on a red drip and scumbled surface rather than on a lab slide. The artist

delineates these forms gesturally, with white staccato dots and loopy lines overlaying a variegated, impasto red-hued ground making the entire painting vibrate visually. The result is a jubilant and slightly mad piece, enticing viewers to more liveliness as they explore the exhibit further.

Near this initial riotous painting are two cool colored ones in blues and greens. *Garden of Dreams* is a summer foliage brush-stroked

delight and next to it is found the soothing, subtle *In the Arms of Angels*, where wispy touches of yellow green paint float dreamily on a tranquil ocean-blue ground like archangels about to appear in visitation.

Her acrylic, *This Girl is On Fire*, is all hot yellows and reds around an anthropomorphic form conjuring up images of a shamanic woman being consumed by flames. The bright colors nearly cause visceral reactions making feelings of hot love almost palpable. Parrilli's companion piece, *Truly, Madly, Deeply*, bears a strong affinity to *This Girl*, in color, gesture and sensual theme, so that both art works together turn up the temperature in an already exhilarating show.

Another piece where the artist examines love is her painting, *Love in Action*, characterized by white forceful calligraphic strokes over deep violets and blues. I found subtle connections to Adolphe Gottlieb's pictographs in this artwork and she alludes the painting is about choices, with questions considered of how we choose in personal relationships, and on a larger scale how we treat each other generally as human beings.

Parrilli has experienced deep emotional pain in her life and some of the paintings are dark in nature, in addition to demonstrating great chromatic intensity. Her piece, *Confronting Shattered Illusions*, is particularly strong as rushing blue-smearred white color crashes up against bold downward palette knifed black strokes to create a composition of all-encompassing pictorial tension. The color forces do battle here, with movement truncated in an almost irrational maelstrom. I thought this work might be one of the ways the artist helps to integrate disappointments and tragedies in her



"Never Again"

past in a fruitful fashion.

Also, the dark blue oil on canvas, *Into the Darkness of Lost Innocence*, is Parrilli's treatment of the grave matter of child sexual abuse. The stark white stroke at the center of the canvas overtakes the dark indigo envelope surrounding it. This bright large calligraphic slash cannot be obliterated by the dark colors as the whiteness cuts through the center of the canvas like a veil torn. It could be symbolic of the child's ability to heal from trauma and experience love. This is just my own interpretation and I'm sure other viewers will bring their own ideas to the piece after seeing it.

Her somber painting, *Never Again*, uses minimal color with short black lashes repeating throughout the pale green canvas surface in a rhythmic march across the picture. This is Parrilli's commemoration of the Holocaust, the dark repetitive almost

uniform paint strokes serving as visual interpretations of Nazi soldiers jack stepping across conquered lands. Survivors of the Shoah raise a continuing cry in our modern day to remind the world never to let this horror repeat.

There are so many great pieces in this exhibit that I can only mention a few of them here. Dellamarie Parrilli is a unique creative force, a self-taught painter, who comes directly up to viewers confronting them with profound emotionally charged art that moves the soul of anyone who sees her work. She awakens a fundamental connection to human feeling in us, greatly needed today, to stir hearts that have been really numbed for far too long. G&S

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