



CRITIQUE OF THE MONTH

Donne Bitner



FIGURE 1—Donne Bitner, *To Remember*, mixed media, 21 x 22 inches, 2005



FIGURE 2 —Paul Klee, *Hermitage*, 1918, watercolor on chalk ground

Art does not reproduce the visible; rather, it makes visible.

—Paul Klee

Donne Bitner gives visible form to her experience of internal reality in stream of consciousness compositions such as *To Remember* (figures 1, 3, and 5).

Working in a manner reminiscent of the dream-like paintings of Paul Klee (figure 2), Bitner develops paintings in a largely intuitive manner. Rather than beginning with a fixed idea of how her paintings will be made and what they'll look like in the end, Bitner starts by introducing a number of visual events (shapes, colors, symbols) and responds to them on the basis of feeling. She moves things around, adds new elements, veils and eliminates others, excavates and discovers, continuing until she reaches a satisfying resolution. By working in this way, Bitner makes her internal processing visible, revealing aspects of reality not accessed in any other way.

To Remember is a wonderful example. Here we see recognizable symbols from Bitner's visual vocabulary—a rabbit, a folding screen, leaves, acone, several figurative forms, etc.—fluidly relating to one another in a world all their own. Forms come and go; relationships are in flux. Meaning is sensed rather than understood. Bitner presents us with a world that is beyond the rational and concrete, a world that stands metaphorically for the mysterious and transcendent.

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Formal success in stream-of-consciousness work is, as in all compositions, dependent on the artist's ability to speak the language of visual composition. Bitner does so with sensitivity and sophistication.

The arrangement holds together well for a variety of formal reasons. At the core, Bitner uses an underlying grid to furnish the arrangement with a satisfying sense of structure (compare figure 3 with the overlay in figure 4). The grid engages the entire picture plane, dividing the space into a series of unified and interlocking rectangles. At the same time, notice that the grid is very subtle; its edges are deftly defined in soft, fluid, and understated fashion, ensuring that its presence does not overwhelm the overall design.

Contributing further to the design's sense of fluidity is a series of rhythmic movements and directional thrusts that move the eye, from point to point, in circular fashion around the edges of the space (compare figure 5 with the manipulated version, figure 6).

The movement begins with the most powerful element in the design: the dark form that sits cropped at the bottom of the space. From there, the directional thrust of the forms pushes from lower left up and to the right, taking the eye over to the rhythmic sequence of three figures, lower right. The third figure in the sequence (highlighted in blue) points up to the screen form, upper right. This form in turn moves rhythmically back to the left, and its left end angles upward toward a series of golden notes on the top edge, left. The last of these notes points subtly downward toward the blue lines at the left edge, middle, which then links to the upside-down cone in red, just below. Finally, this cone points us back to the ear of the rabbit at the bottom, completing the circular thread.



FIGURE 3



FIGURE 4



FIGURE 5

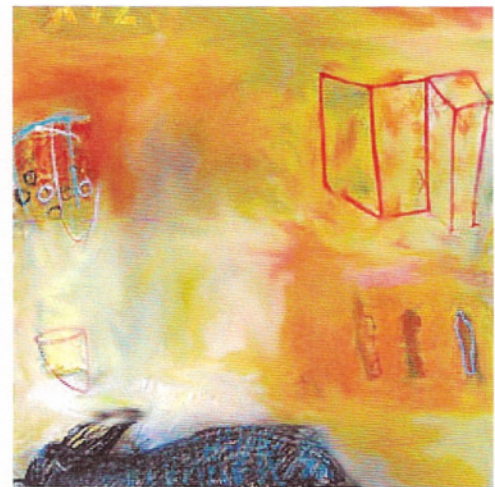


FIGURE 6

Steven Aimone

author of *DESIGN! A Lively Guide to Design Basics for Artists and Craftspeople* (Lark Books, 2004)

Donne Bitner

ABOUT THE ARTIST

FROM THE ARTIST'S WEBSITE:

Donne Bitner graduated with honors from Penn State University with a degree in Art and has been a full-time studio artist for the last 15 years. She is currently an instructor at Crealde School of Art in watercolor, monotypes, and experimental acrylics and maintains a studio at McRae Art Studio in Winter Park, Florida. Her work is exhibited in museum shows and art festivals throughout the United States and has appeared in a variety of publications including *American Artist Watercolor Magazine*, *International Artist*, and *Watercolor Magic*.

Donne's artwork can be found in the collections of the Huntsville Museum of Art, Springfield Art Museum, Gulf Coast Center for the Arts, Vero Beach Center for the Arts, Daytona Beach Museum of Arts and Sciences, Maitland Museum of Art, Rollins College, State of Florida Capital Collection, Holmes Medical Center, Cape Canaveral Hospital, Greater Orlando Aviation Authority, and the cities of Atlanta, Orlando, and Melbourne. She is a signature member of both the National Watercolor Society and Florida Watercolor Society, a member of the Watercolor USA Honor Society, and a recipient of a Florida Individual Artist's Fellowship in 2002.

FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING DONNE BITNER, visit her website: <http://www.donnebitner.com/index.htm>