

Issue 1  
August 15, 2009

I assume you are reading this newsletter because you are either interested in abstract art or art in general. By now you have likely read my [Artist's Statement](#) and know a little about how I ended up trying this thing called "art".

First, I will tell you a little about my interest in abstract art, and then tell you a little about the Abstract Expressionist movement. I will also have a featured artist in each issue, alternating between both classical and contemporary abstract artists.

I'll be honest. I can't draw a stick figure. I am not drawn to art that looks like a photograph, though I do appreciate the talent it requires. Abstract art appeals to me, as I assume it appeals to most of its fans, because it expresses emotion and uses colors and composition in interesting and innovative ways. It is risky. It is often unintentional, without dwelling on results but focusing on the process. Now, I will also add that many, if not all, abstract artists can in fact paint realism. They choose to be abstract artists. A lot of people say, "I can do that," or "My five-year old could do that," or things of that nature. My response to the former is go ahead and try. It's not as easy as it looks. My response to the latter is, of course you can. [Children don't have the self-imposed limitations](#) that many adults seem to have. They feel free to create and aren't pressured by fear of "messing it up."

### **Abstract Art: A Brief History**

Abstract: ab·stract. – adjective. Fine arts: a. of or pertaining to the formal aspect of art, emphasizing lines, colors, generalized or geometrical forms, etc., esp. with reference to their relationship to another.

The term Abstract Expressionism was first used to describe work by [Wassily Kandinsky](#) in 1919. The term was later applied to a movement started mainly in New York in the 1940s which was highly active and influential through the 1950s and early 1960s. Early pioneers of the movement include [Jackson Pollock](#) and [Willem de Kooning](#). It was officially recognized in the 1951 Museum of Modern Art exhibition "Abstract Painting and Sculpture in America". The term "action painting" has been used in relation to abstract art, to refer to the same general types of artistic activity which, however, began to be differentiated into two tendencies: brush painting concerned with gesture, action, and texture (de Kooning, Pollock), and color-field painting concerned with a large unified shape or area of color ([Mark Rothko](#)).

Abstract Expressionism is a landmark in the general history of art and of modern art in particular. It represents a revolutionary event which revises our view of things before and after. As Hollywood, Coke or a Ford soon became part of the everyday geography of experience, so the most famous instances of Abstract Expressionism have provided ready-made symbols of modernity to our cosmopolitan eyes.

**Featured Artist: Jonas Gerard,  
Asheville, NC**

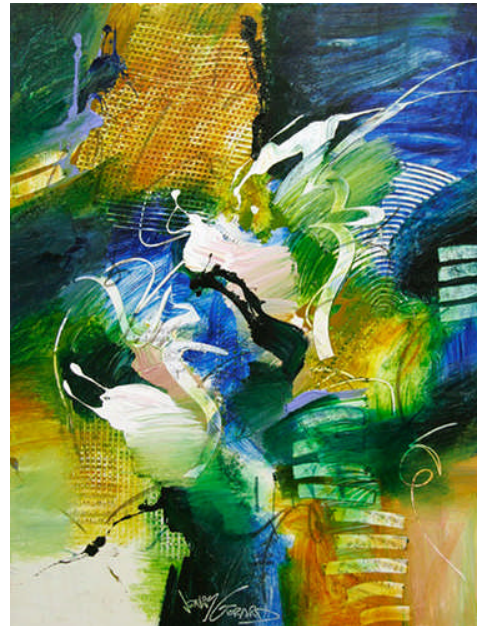
I chose Jonas Gerard as my first featured artist not only because I love his work, but because his art, and he as a person, has made a profound impact on me. I will tell the story and then introduce you to his work.

Jonas' gallery is located in my home town of Asheville, NC. One day last year, during a particularly bad bout of depression, my therapist said "You like abstract art, go see Jonas Gerard". I was desperate, so I dragged myself to his downtown studio. The minute I walked through the door, something happened inside me. I saw the vibrancy and passion of his work and it stirred positive feelings. My world of gray suddenly had color. As I walked through his studio, these positive feelings intensified.



Not too long after, he had a reception. I walked up to him and introduced myself. I briefly told him my story. It made him happy that his work had made me feel better. Some time later, when my father died, we were discussing art. He asked me about the largest size canvas I had painted. I

told him, but said that the only reason I hadn't painted a larger canvas was due to financial reasons. The next thing I know, he is buying me large canvasses and letting me pick out other ones. He also gave me some of his professional paints. 40 8 oz jars. I felt like my Dad was working through Jonas that day, though Jonas is a generous man. He has taken me under his wing a bit, offering me advice and encouraging me to focus on the process, not the end result.



Jonas is a very talented and successful artist who has already made a strong presence in Asheville though he has only been here a year. He can paint any style. His 8 foot painting, "We the People" was accepted at the White House in Washington, DC in 1975 by President Gerald R. Ford on behalf of all Americans. This painting, considered our Nation's Bicentennial portrait, is now a permanent part of the Smithsonian Institute's collection. He chooses to do abstract art. He has a very distinct style. He has particular tools and a unique technique. You can

see the results of the tools in his swirls and lines.

He is a fast painter, and admittedly paints better in front of a live audience. His performance paintings are an amazing and inspiring experience. Watching him have so much fun makes you want to go home and paint! He paints directly from 32oz jars and uses a separate brush for every color. Obviously he is not the one washing them!

He uses a "push and pull" technique first used by Hans Hofmann. Hofmann proved that the illusion of space, depth, and even movement on a canvas could be created abstractly using color and shape, rather than representational forms. Jonas paints with large brushes on large canvasses (most of the time). He uses intent, sweeping strokes and often splashes paint on the canvas. He will sometimes paint over sections as he is working. He meditates, usually for an hour, before he paints. He turns his mind off and his mind therefore frees him to do what he does. He likes to paint in the middle of the night, when he is not as affected by other people's energy. I strongly encourage you to [check out his work](#).

**What I've Been Up to Lately:**

I have been experimenting with house paint. I was given a 5 gallon bucket of blood red. Red is my favorite color, so I was thrilled. I have about 10 other colors. I find that mixing them with plaster on the canvas gives them more texture and "tooth". I am just trying to focus on the joy of creating and not the end result. Doing that is easier sometimes than others. To that end, I am taking a workshop next weekend called [The Painting Experience](#). It is being held in Asheville. It is supposed to get you focused on the process and not the product. It should be fun.



My latest: Extrovert III  
Mixed Media on Canvas

I would love to hear from you! Please send any comments, questions, or suggestions regarding future abstract artists or articles.

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