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Artist David Foss and "Enjoying the process of art"

Black ink abstract flower petals against an abstract background drawing in a small but thick 3" x 5" frame. A 3" x 5" abstract pinwheel-like black ink drawing in another small but thick frame.

And colorful abstracts with blues, purples, light greens, light pinks, dark browns, reds, muted beiges

(all in various hues) contained in different shapes (linear, cylindrical, triangular, rectangular, and/or circles) painted on oil or watercolor canvases or papers.

Such geometrical themes as above can be seen in the vast collection of artworks created by artist David Foss of Westwood, Massachusetts.

Foss grew up in Needham, Newton, and Wellesley. A high school graduate, he decided against going to college and was employed as a computer programmer for 35 years.

"I worked with big computers, including insurance company type of computers. I worked for Harvard Pilgrim. In the end, when I retired, I was working for Hewlett Packard, contracting with them for AIG insurance companies," Foss said.

An artist in high school, Foss always carried a 3" x 5" notebook with him – and still does – but didn't get back into the art mode until the 1990s. "I was always doing things – drawing. I've done a certain amount of stone polishing and carving and woodcarving. But I've been doing primarily watercolors for the last six or seven years. Before that I was doing pen and ink drawings. They're small miniatures."



Terry Foss, his wife, is a great fan of her husband's artworks. "I think the progression is interesting. He really started with almost doodles and then got better at them. And when he finally added color, that was more interesting to me."

Foss's artistic style continued to develop when he started attending the Art Mentoring program at Art for All Studio in Somerville, MA approximately three years ago. He stepped away from creating small scale artworks to complex and larger scaled watercolors and water based oil paintings.





“When David started here at Art for All Studio, he was doing very small watercolors. The work was very Pointillist and non-representational. Over the course of the four years that David has been involved with the Artist Mentoring program, he’s really developed in terms of artwork size and composition,” said Denise Malis, owner of Art for All Studio.

Malis is also an art therapist, a Somerville artist, and a full time faculty member at the School of Visual and Performing Arts at Endicott College.

Foss is one of a small number of artists who attend the program. All participants have experienced challenges with mental health. Each attending artist creates visual art independently at Art for All Studio facilitated by Malis.

In the Art Mentoring program, artists work on art projects in the same work space and discuss their creations. All of the artists involved in this group contribute to an environment based on collective ambiance with the shared language of making art with others. There is no critique forum, but each artist knows that they can share their work at any stage. Then the artists can comment on what they see and feel about these artworks. “It’s a largely encouraging kind of behavior – helping people out about how the art might look better, or what would help make the art look better. So that’s a process that I’ve been very happy with,” said Foss.

And what does Malis think about Foss’s artwork? “It’s really incredible,” she said and explained how that Foss’s art pieces developed from small watercolors to almost a mosaic style where he designs small rectangles and connects them. And he layers his rectangle images now whereas before working at Art for All Studio he did not.

“David has a very specific palate – not monochromatic. It’s a full palate... It’s very dynamic. You can really see the energy in what he puts into the work and how it comes together, she continued.

Foss had two of his



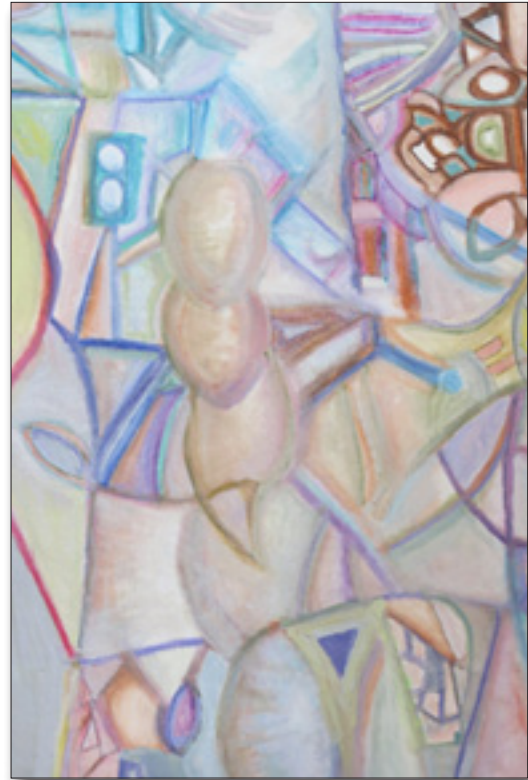
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large watercolors and two of his paintings, one acrylic and one water-based oils, in the "Art as Gift: The Artistic Voice of Studio Art Therapy" exhibit that was curated by Malis at Endicott College, January 10 through March 15, 2013.

Malis said that she doesn't know in which direction Foss's artwork is headed. She suggests that "He'll continue to work on a large scale. I don't think that he'll get larger than 20" x 24" because the nature of his work ... He has kind of a moveable studio!"

The standard size painting that Foss makes is 11" x 15" but he creates large pictures as large as 20" x 24". Many of his artworks are structured in a rational, mathematical style. But, on the other side, other pieces may appear less structured. Lots of them have an almost Indian style. "I like that [critique]. That's fine," he said. "But mostly it's abstracts. Just whatever I think of as abstracts as I'm doing them. Water-color abstracts."

Like one of his favorite artists, Piet Mondrian (1872-1944), Foss works with primary colors like red, blue, green. He blends them into different hues, sometimes by layering the paints. Influenced by Georges Pierre Seurat (1859-1891) and Mondrian, he enjoys the process of Pointillism. At one point, Foss would look at magazines and newspapers and pixilate images into paintings. Foss also highly appreciates the works of Fernand Léger (1881-1955), Pablo Picasso (1881-1973), and Jackson Pollack (1912-1956).



Foss's world is usually a geometric one. He likes to have shapes, he said. "Today, I'm particularly liking this one!" Foss refers to a very colorful, symmetrical work. He continues, "And it has all of these geometric characteristics. Almost all of mine have geometric characteristics."

Foss's artwork is often very linear, shape-oriented, and/or cosmic in appearance. Most of his paintings

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have lots of activity going on, such as his “colorful abstract” that has thick, colorful lines along with colorful shapes that look as wild as falling meteorites. The painting looks like it is New Year’s Eve, and a cosmic, explosive celebration is happening!

There is another “colorful abstract”, as Foss calls many of his abstracts, with lines that zigzag alternatingly with white zigzag lines making shapes that look like repeating “W”s. The vibrant colors seen in this “colorful abstract” are reds, maroons, greens, pinks, aquas, differing shades of yellows. It looks like an erratic maze.

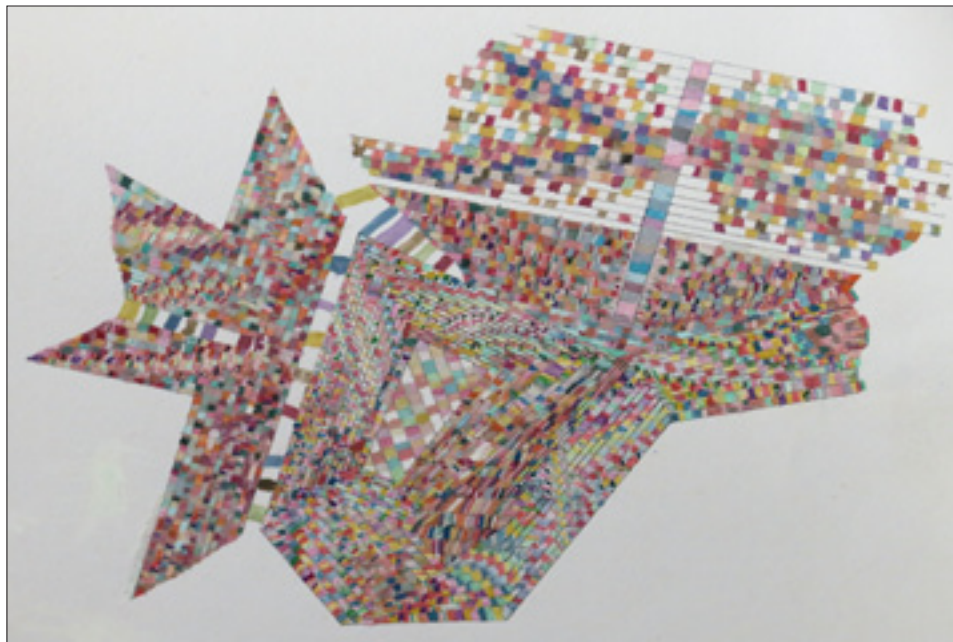
Another “colorful abstract” is geometric, once again, with stripes of connected, diverse colors – linear with a patch of “fluff”, or a lightness of color amidst heavy cosmic thought. The “fluff” looks almost like an alien amid repetitive lines of greens, pinks, aquas, blues, yellows, reds, browns, etc. with much white space in the background. This white space is significant, and causes the viewer to wonder why did Foss leave so much white in the background?

There is an intriguing “abstract” that is not as visually attractive as other Foss paintings. The colors are layered blacks, grays, muted purples with only a little areas of white space along the edge of the work’s canvas. This piece is messy looking, with most of the painted colors blending together into what could be called a cosmic disaster with much visual impact.

Foss has the talent to make clean, direct, yet still abstract images as well as very busy, less tidy, and not-so-pretty drawings. He has a strong preference for building, for construction types of problems and for engineering and mathematical activities, he said.

He likes to concentrate on the process of architecture, though he said, “I’m not architectural other than that I’m interested in [its method].”

Foss is a great fan of the process of art. “I see what I see on the page as



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I'm doing it. Let that expand and grow ... But I started making these sort of random shapes and then over the years I've been finding out that I like to make these pencil grids and see how they combine to grow into something.

People talk about what I do – I talk about what I do – as a form of accretion where things grow on the page. And then, when I think it's done, then I decide that it's finished."

Sometimes Foss finds the creation process of an artwork to move along at a fast pace. But at the same time, another piece may take more time. "Sometimes they go really quickly. (This one, I think, was three weeks.) And then I can sometimes do them in a week or less depending upon how hard I'm working, how much time I'm taking."



His inspiration often happens when he is simply sitting down and doing the process. "A lot of what I've done recently has been to create the matrix using pencil and then filling in the matrix with color using other parts of the page."

The artworks do not necessarily have dedicated names. He would prefer to just call each one of them "abstract whatever".

Foss appreciates input from his audience who views his artworks. "...They really like to know that I have some image that equates with their thinking. I like the idea that [the artworks] are cosmic, that they have like almost a spiritual or astronomy as a feeling of cosmic explosions. And those images sometimes end up being what people see and what I like people to see."

People do not necessarily see the identical images in Foss's art pieces. Someone may identify a sneaker in one painting, and another person looking at that same image in that same artwork may see a grasshopper. "It really pulls out of the person whatever they see in what David has created," his wife said.

"I'm always looking for shapes within shapes. So the art provides me with the ability to see things and then have them progress over and over again. Often I take pictures of canvases or paper in the process. So I have initial shapes and then I take a picture of that to remind myself of what it was before I finish, go on and fill it in and finish it. It ends up looking more and more like something else! ... I like the process!"

For David Foss, making art puts things in check. "Well, it puts things in perspective. But it also is like I was building a wooden project. I really like having something in my hands when I'm done. That represents the time that I put into something. The pleasure I take from having done it but also the pleasure from looking at it after the fact – and enjoying."