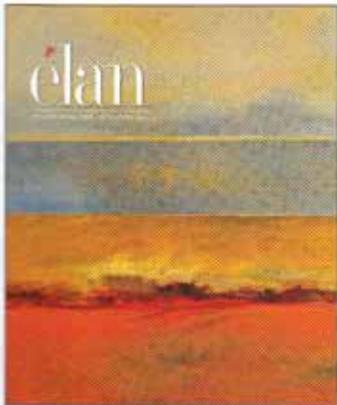


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On the cover: "Blue Ridge Morning," oil on linen, 24" x 30", by Donna Clark; see page 50

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REPRINT

Élan Magazine: Celebrating the Arts | Artist Duane Cregger, 'True Art: Reactions to the Medium'

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ARTIST DUANE CREGGER

True Art

REACTIONS TO THE MEDIUM
BY DONNA CEDAR-SOUTHWORTH



Duane Cregger

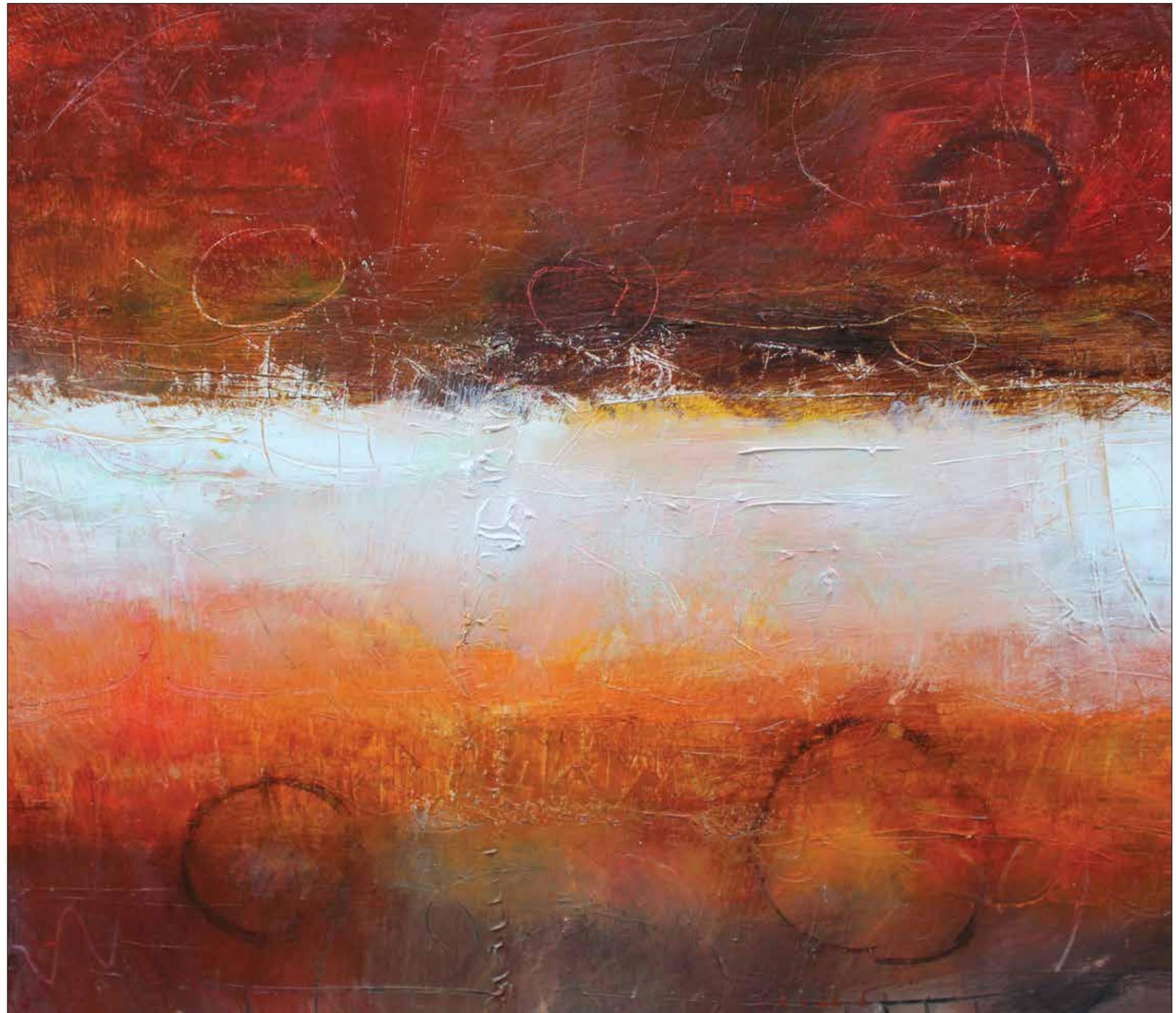
"I'm neither acutely aware of physically applying paint to the canvas nor making concrete conscious decisions regarding color, shape, line and texture. These decisions become reflexes and reactions to the medium...."

"Suncycle," acrylic on canvas, 48" x 60"

The basis of art is truth, both in matter and in mode," wrote Flannery O'Connor. Truth, on the one hand personal, and on the other universal, is the current that runs through Duane Cregger's profound oil and acrylic paintings. Viewers of his work are struck by art that is pure, genuine, honest and true. It is a truth that is masterfully communicated on canvas. The work is notable, not only for the brilliant color, texture, layering, glyphs, composition and sheer physicality and audacity of size, but also the sense of humility and the gentle spirit that guide its maker. This is art in its truest form—true to the artist and universal in nature—that stands the test of time.

Annette Aaron, owner of Aaron Gallery in D.C.'s West End, was not looking to represent any more artists as she had a full cadre. But when she saw Duane's work, she saw art that she had not seen in a long time and she contacted him immediately. "He has the kind of color that takes me away," says Annette. "His sense of color is exactly what I get lost into, and he does it with a way that he is so genuine—as a person and as an artist. ...His sensitive nature, combined with his sense of sophistication, is allowing him to feed other persons' souls."

Duane says he is simply yielding to his paintings: "It starts out very flat, and I don't know where any of it's going and I don't think about it beforehand. And then as it's building, things start to...happen. There's a quiet in my mind the whole time, and I'm just letting something else take over.... So the conscious decisions aren't, I think, the most important ones in my paintings. It's more like a part of myself opens up, and by letting the consciousness go a little bit and being less in that self-awareness, you're able to let that other part come out. I think that happens in anything we do that we enjoy or that's rewarding. It's almost like I've shifted to a different level of awareness about things—I'm neither acutely aware of physically applying paint to the canvas nor making concrete conscious decisions regarding color, shape, line and texture. These decisions become reflexes and reactions to the medium, an autonomous process that rises as a bell curve and wanes as the painting nears obvious completion."





“There is a deep imprint of the [Blue Ridge Highlands] topography and Appalachian culture that has become part of my creative process.”

—Duane Cregger

Duane grew up in Marion, Virginia, in the Blue Ridge Highlands. “There is a deep imprint of the region’s topography and Appalachian culture that has become part of my creative process,” he says. He spent a great deal of time in his grandmother’s gas station/grocery store and was extremely close to her. His high school art teacher was a mentor. Duane still has the wooden box she gave him for graduation. It’s inscribed, “What is an artist if not God’s spokesperson to Humanity?”

Following his graduation from Roanoke College, where he studied advertising design and art commu-

nications, Duane moved to D.C., where he lived for 15 years, building a successful career in marketing and art directing and eventually owning his own design firm. In 2002, when three of his closest friends suffered tragic deaths, Duane moved back home to regroup and to paint his way through his losses. “That whole experience...was some sort of awakening,” he says. “It awakened the artist—it awakened this need to investigate the depth of life a little more and recognize depth in my own life.”

During this time of reflection, Duane immersed himself in the readings of Carl Jung, ancient scriptures,



Above: "Tambourine," 40" x 40"

Opposite, clockwise from top left: "Clade 3 of 3," 36" x 36"; "Post 317," 30" x 30"; "Clade 1 of 3," 36" x 36"; and "Yatterings," 40" x 40"
All are acrylic on canvas.

philosophers, psychologists, Judaism and Christianity. "They all informed me," he says. "And I think that's what helped me see there's a broader human experience that isn't specifically cultural—it's cross-cultural or pan-cultural.... These are things that every person experiences in some format, just the details are different."

Duane feels that his art speaks to "the unity of our experiences here. So many people are able to compartmentalize, and I think my art de-compartmentalizes. It takes seemingly disparate elements and connects them somehow. I feel like my art is like a giant Venn diagram

with lots of overlapping circles—because it overlaps so many pieces of things that may have a common piece together that aren't necessarily thought of as common to each other."

Duane's work is on view as part of a group exhibit, *The New Direction of Color*, continuing through June 30 at Aaron Gallery, 2101 L Street, N.W., Suite 1000 in D.C. To arrange an appointment for viewing, contact the gallery at 202-234-3311 or info@aarongallerydc.com. é

Duane Cregger | www.duanecregger.com



WORD FROM THE EDITOR

In the Moment

THE EMPOWERED ARTIST

About a decade ago, one of our alumni artists proclaimed that she could teach anyone to paint. While the foundation of visual art to a large degree can be taught, much of what informs our creativity comes from within.

Donna Clark, the subject of one of our June profiles, describes the phenomenon of intuitive painting, noting that she works without a preconceived notion of the final product. "The painting develops as I paint it," she says. "It's coming out of my imagination, and it's a completely intuitive process. I really don't know how I get there."

Our June issue features other artists who have learned to listen to the inner voices that guide their creative endeavors: Sue Lynch, whose semi-abstract landscapes

emphasize color and shape; Duane Cregger, whose dynamic abstract images combine bold color, texture and layering; and Elisabeth Hudgins, whose trove of family stories informs her mixed-media works. We'll also introduce you to actor Tom Story, who plays dual roles in the Shakespeare Theater Company's current production of *The Winter's Tale*.

Our *DayTripper* review takes in the astonishing array of drawings, prints and watercolors of Albrecht Dürer at the National Gallery of Art. We also take a peek at the ultra-modern design innovations on view at the historic Woodlawn plantation in Alexandria. And our *Slice of Life* column celebrates the incomparable joy of reading.

Carpe diem.

—AR

"Babble Bubble," acrylic on canvas, 36" x 48", by Duane Cregger; see page 60