

Lorna Ritz: Recent Paintings and Drawings features the work of a long-time resident of the Amherst/Northampton area. The exhibition opens concurrently with Diana Thater on January 30 and will remain on view through May 7. The artist will give a gallery tour of her exhibition on Wednesday, February 11 at 3:30 p.m., an event which is free and open to the public.

Ritz has steadily absorbed the full sensations of the nature that surrounds her wherever she happens to be at the time whether in the South American climate of Colombia or that of the four seasons in her own backyard in South Amherst. Over the years she has been able to express those visceral feelings into a study and celebration of color, the element which for her defines the emerging form. The artist has said that she searches "...for the structure and form through the relationship of colors. I am interested in the vibration that occurs when the edge of one color touches that of another. They define each other by not being the same, but of a particular quality that allows them to pull apart spatially, creating the illusion of depth on the flat surface of linen. This process of painting evolves through improvisation, a constant removal and replacement of colors that manifest an inner sense of illumination...My eye translates directly to my hands."

Though their processes and manner of expression are quite different, both Ritz and Thater offer viewers an opportunity to consider their bonds with nature: Thater gives us a balance between recorded representation and abstracted editing in her conceptually-conceived and illusionistically presented views of already mediated nature; Ritz shares with us a re-presentation of her own absorption of the colors and light that formally integrate into painted recollections of time and place. How we see, understand and ultimately feel our world depends on the fluid association between thoughtful subjectivity and objective clarity—how the outside seeps in, takes hold, forms and is formed by us.

Based in South Amherst, Lorna Ritz has traveled widely as a teacher, lecturer and artist-in-residence. Most recently she was a member of the painting faculty at the Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (1995-96) and received a grant from the U.S. Information Agency to teach and exhibit her work at the Instituto de Belles Artes, Medellin, Colombia (1990). Ritz has received numerous invitations to present lectures at various institutions, among them the American University, Washington D.C. (1991); the New York Studio School, New York (1990); "Lacoste," French School of the Cleveland Institute of Art and the Institute for American Universities, Aix-en-Provence (1986). In 1985-86 she traveled to Malta through the U.S. Information Agency and in 1983 that same agency granted her a six week residency at the University of Honduras. Ritz's work has been included in one-person and group exhibitions internationally including the Bowery Gallery, New York (1994-95); the Hillyer Gallery, Smith College, Northampton (1994); and the Mona Bismarck Foundation, Paris (1991). From 1984 through 1993, her paintings were a part of the "Art In Embassies Program," Washington D.C. and toured to Guatemala City, Guatemala; Brazzaville, the Congo; Banjul, The Gambia; Valetta, Malta; and Praia, Cape Verde. The recipient of many awards and grants since 1968, Ritz was honored with a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant Award this past summer.

The University Gallery, located on the lower level of the Fine Arts Center, is open to the public Tuesday through Friday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday from 2 to 5 p.m. The Gallery is also open during evening performances held in the Concert Hall of the Fine Arts Center. For more information, please call the Gallery at 413.545.3670.

