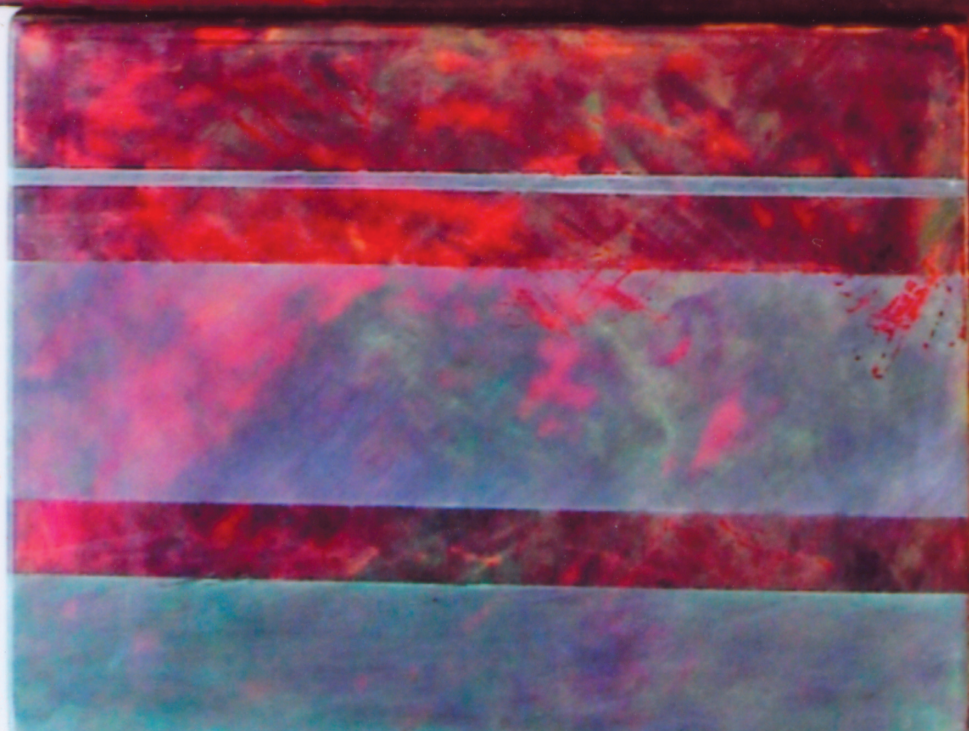


PLASTIC FANTASTIC



ABOVE, one of many untitled pieces in Ginny Fox's upcoming Chelsea exhibit.

Artist's new medium brings colors to life

By Nicole LaRosa

Three years ago, Ginny Fox fell in love.

The Riverdale artist met the material she thought she'd spend the rest of her life with: pigmented encaustic — a beeswax "paint" she cooked up herself in her living room. She layered it on pillars of wood, creating rich, sensual textures that fascinated her. "The color became physical," she said. It even smelled good.

She showed the pieces proudly in SOHO20 Gallery in Chelsea, where she's held group and solo exhibits for the past 10 years.

But like many women before her, Ms. Fox, 53, soon found herself in an unhealthy relationship. Despite its natural origin, the toxic gases from the wax gave her breathing problems.

"There's no such thing as a totally innocent material," she said. She had to break it off.

One day, while nursing her broken heart through the search for a new medium, she was intrigued by the rigid insert of a translucent frosted shopping bag. Suddenly, it hit her: Plastic!

Using plastic box picture frames as her latest canvases, the artist rubbed richly hued acrylic paints onto the slick, non-porous surfaces, mixing the colors on the spot. She was delighted at how the greens and blues retained their vibrancy. "I'm inspired by the layering of the paint," she said, and how the texture created the look of natural materials like earth, stone and metal. "I really love the magic of transformation."

Her latest pieces — each with a \$1,200 to \$1,400 price tag — will be on display at SOHO20, during most of September.

Liberated by her new work surface, Ms. Fox's new pieces include bright reds, shades she had never used before. "I don't know [why],"

she said, "except that I got really excited by them!"

When she was done painting the different-sized individual boxes, she laid them all out and clipped them together as the inspiration grabbed her. When hung together, the angular pieces call to mind a jigsaw puzzle, which was just what Ms. Fox wanted. "They're individual yet they connect to each other," she said.

A nature lover, Ms. Fox acknowledged the irony of her new medium: "I was getting sick from the natural and now I'm working with the plastics."

But as the unpretentious artist moved joyfully about her large, sunny loft studio in an old Yonkers carpet factory last week, it was clear she is at peace. Colorful collections from each of her "periods" grace the walls and shelves — like the gauzy burgundy and brown fabrics stiffened by a glaze of tiny glass beads and shaped into envelopes and purses — "things that hold secrets," she explained. She's even got space to store materials for her day job as a window display designer.

"I had this image of working with the encaustics forever," she said, "but everything has its good outcome."

Ms. Fox's work will be on display from Tuesday, Sept. 5 to Saturday, Sept. 30, at SOHO 20, 511 W. 25th St., 6th floor, Tuesday through Saturday, from noon to 6 p.m., with an opening reception on Saturday, Sept. 9, from 5 to 7 p.m.



RIVERDALE ARTIST Ginny Fox in her Yonkers studio.

Photo by Stefan Cohen