

BY RHOANN
PONSETI

Martha Channer

Artist at Work,
with Feeling



What do dance and abstract painting have in common? Artist Martha Channer knows the answer—and above all feels it. With the passion of an artist and a dancer, she answers: movement, feeling, emotion, a sense of space and place.

Channer, by her own definition, is an “art channel.” She never knows exactly what is going to come through her creative receiving unit. “I’ve learned to put it all to use,” she tells us, “whether it’s in my true passion—non-objective abstract painting, my commercial decorative painting, or modern dance and movement.”

Martha fills in her background, “After graduating from Barat College and attending the Art Institute of Chicago, I concentrated on dance and choreography. I combined this with set design and gallery installations geared toward performance. My love of movement and meaning is as present in my painting as it is in my choreography. Dance has greatly affected the quality of gesture in my work.

“This is also why non-objective abstract is my genre. To me, like choreography, it is a transcendent language – one of myth and magic. It is a language of the imagination that best describes our deepest reality . . . a place of integration where ‘the dancer becomes the dance.’”

Like many women, Martha is a multi-faceted multi-tasker. As an artist she manages to split her time, her energy and even her two web sites along a clear divide: the business of art (murals, decorative finishes and color consulting), the passion of art (abstract painting) and teaching modern dance at Sebastopol Art Center. Above all she is a successful and competent businesswoman who has made her living in the arts for over 20 years.

Via Chicago and San Diego, Martha now calls Sebastopol home. A fateful wine country vacation resulted in a chance meeting with now-husband and co-creator, Craig Mitchell, a Sonoma County resident. Never married and not particularly looking for a relationship, Martha met Craig and chemistry of mind and spirit sparked a long-distance relationship that grew into a successful marriage and partnership.

Channer has found her true home in Sonoma County. And here, at the perfect time for her career and her life, she is enjoying it all, coming into her own as both an artist and a woman.

“It’s right when things just happen for you. I have worked just as hard here, but there has been a different response.

It may be partly my growth as an artist, but it’s also just the right place. It’s important for me to live someplace where I can communicate freely and be myself. I prefer to be kind and loving and would not function in a cutthroat environment,” she explains about her love for Sonoma County.

In her newish life she shares a studio and creative energy with Mitchell. Part of her acceptance locally is illustrated in a show the pair have crafted for early 2007 at the Sonoma County Arts Council gallery. The work will encompass

Finding Martha

Decorative:
www.architecturalpainting.com
 or www.sourcesonoma.com

Abstract: www.marthachanner.com

Sonoma County Arts Council show opens Saturday, January 13th, 5-9 p.m. www.sonomaarts.org

Modern Dance classes, contact Sebastopol Arts Center www.sebarts.org.

the entire gallery space. Called Interior-Exterior/a new perspective on landscape, the show will explore our inner and exterior “landscapes” and subtle nuances therein. Created with expressions of male and female in partnership, it should be a fascinating exhibit, one long on feeling, on movement, on a sense of space.

Martha Channer: welcome to Sonoma County. You’re fitting right in.