

NEWS RELEASE

For more information, contact:

Jodie Littleton
Communications Consultant
Adkins Arboretum
410.490.6930
jlittleton@adkinsarboretum.org



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Watermarks, Encaustic Paintings by Marilyn Banner, on View through May at Adkins Arboretum

Where the ocean's waves meet the sand, everything is in flux. In her luminous encaustic paintings on view at the Adkins Arboretum Visitor's Center through May 27, Takoma Park artist Marilyn Banner explores this transitory edge, capturing its tiny details in radiant color and rich, translucent layers of activity. There will be a reception to meet the artist on Sat., April 30 from 3 to 5 p.m.

When she first showed her work at the Arboretum five years ago, Banner was painting encaustic landscapes and seascapes, but recently she has turned her gaze downward to the water's edge.

"I started wandering and just looking at what happens on the beach," Banner said. "There's a feeling of huge expanse with the water always coming and going. Fascinating things happen. You see hints of a bird walking through or a seashell, and then you don't see it. Sometimes there's a layer of black sand underneath that gets partially exposed, and it makes these incredible designs. It's amazing."



"Approach," an encaustic painting on wood by Takoma Park artist Marilyn Banner, is among Banner's works on view through May 27 at Adkins Arboretum.

Colors and shapes dance across the surface of a small painting called "Approach." Imprints of intricate sea fans spread in from three sides to mingle with the bright white curving edges of shells and what seems

like water washing through churning sand. Full of rhythm flow and spidery emerald green linework, it's a tapestry of colors and textures.

Banner exhibits frequently in New York and the Washington, D.C., area. While earning a BFA at Washington University in St. Louis and an MEd at Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, she came to see art as an open-ended process of discovery, a philosophy handed down from the Abstract Expressionists of the 1950s. For her, making art is a way of coming to know the inner world by exploring the landscapes of the outer world.

Because it flows just as water and sand flow with the breaking waves, the molten wax she paints with reflects the transitory nature of her subject matter and of nature in general. Captivated by the versatility and pure physicality that encaustic painting offers, she mixes pigments that range from deep purple-grays and blues to ethereal pale hues that call to mind sunlight glinting on sand. She layers colors and textures, scratches back into the wax, draws on top of it, presses objects into its surface, then rubs their imprints with pigment to highlight the delicate shapes.

Composed of beeswax and damar resin, usually with pigments mixed in, encaustic is an ancient medium dating back at least to portraits created on Egyptian mummies. Increasingly popular since the 1990s, it's a technically challenging medium that requires heating and painting with molten wax, but its luminous color and translucent depth make it strikingly beautiful and sensuous.

Interestingly, while Banner's paintings are intimate, close-up views of the shifting evidence of life that she finds at the water's edge, they can also evoke stars, swirling galaxies and infinite space.

"I play with the fluidity and how when I press sea fans and shells into the hot wax, some of it picks up and some doesn't. I kind of like it when it doesn't all pick up," she explained. "Part of what's intriguing to me is that you're seeing this thing that's disintegrating. You see it, and then you don't. These things make me think about life and death, how everything's continually coming and going."

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum's ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through May 27 at the Arboretum Visitor's Center located at 12610 Eveland Road near Tuckahoe State Park in Ridgely. Contact the Arboretum at 410-634-2847, ext. 0 or info@adkinsarboretum.org for gallery hours.

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Adkins Arboretum is a 400-acre native garden and preserve at the headwaters of the Tuckahoe Creek in Caroline County. Open year round, the Arboretum is the region's resource for native plants and education programs about nature, ecology and wildlife conservation gardening. For more information, visit adkinsarboretum.org or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.

Adkins Arboretum 12610 Eveland Road P.O. Box 100 Ridgely, MD 21620
410.634.2847 www.adkinsarboretum.org info@adkinsarboretum.org