

NEWS RELEASE

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***Tidal*, Mixed Media Works by Alison Cooley, on View Through September at Adkins Arboretum**

There's something dazzling about the pure, carefree joy of Alison Cooley's mixed media paintings in her exhibit, *Tidal*, on view at Adkins Arboretum's Visitor's Center through Sept. 27. Although abstract, their watery pools of deep, luscious color and the needle-thin lines that scribble and loop across their surfaces conjure seaweed swirling under the waves, wind-whipped grasses and the sweeping movement of flocks of birds or schools of fish. There will be a reception to meet the artist on Sat., Aug. 10 from 3 to 5 p.m.

Cooley has long been fascinated with the ever-changing margins where water meets land.

"I am always drawn to the edges of land," she said. "I lived for 14 years on Nantucket Island, and now my studio in Easton is near the water. Even when I lived in cities, I was close to the rivers. The immediacy and intensity of weather and water continue to be a big theme for me."

Everything is in motion in these paintings. As if glimpsed in a fleeting moment of change, the lush pools of emerald, turquoise and inky blue in "Tidal 7175" seem to billow out of the pure white of the paper. Skinny colored lines make gawky ovals that skitter by on top, while tiny doodles bubble up here and there. The effect is comic, beautiful and as exhilarating as a walk on the beach. You can almost feel the refreshing chill of foamy water streaming around your ankles.



Alison Cooley, "Tidal 7175"

Cooley paints and draws with acrylic ink, oil pastel, pencil, pen and marker. Whether on large gessoed panels or on yupo paper, a super-smooth, waterproof polypropylene paper, she works on ultra-smooth surfaces that allow her ink to flow and bloom with seemingly effortless ease. Like some of the artists she admires, including Helen Frankenthaler, Franz Kline and Cy Twombly, Cooley works spontaneously, listening to music as she mixes drawing and painting techniques in deceptively casual dialogues between color and linework, texture and smoothness, tension and flow.

“I start my work by staining the panel or paper with pools of ink,” she explained. “I find layering, marking and untangling forms an intuitive process, so I move from piece to piece. Sound and music are a huge part of my practice. In the end, I think less about painting and more about being in balance with the harmonies and rhythms of the music or the subtle noises from outside.”

Each of Cooley’s paintings is a wild dance of rich, earthy spills of paint mingling with swooping linework and gatherings of tiny marks. Full of fascinating details that sometimes look almost like what you might find in a tidal pool, sometimes like handwritten secret messages, they allow for many interpretations. But, like both music and nature, each is an energetic balancing act between change and continuity.

Asked what she hopes people will get from her paintings, Cooley said she prefers they form their own ideas, but that they may have “a feeling of the beautiful and relentless cycle of nature, and, in larger strokes: harmony and dissonance, certainty and illusion.”

This show is part of Adkins Arboretum’s ongoing exhibition series of work on natural themes by regional artists. It is on view through Sept. 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 offers educational programs for all ages about nature and gardening. For more information, visit adkinsarboretum.org or call 410-634-2847, ext. 0.

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