

whitewall

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Margaret Garrett, Emil Lukas, and Melissa Meyer



Three new shows of abstract paintings in New York share a musicality and colorful beauty that merit a mid-winter's visit. The first is painter Margaret Garrett's rich exhibit of paintings on view at Birnam Wood Galleries' Chelsea location through February 15. While this is Garrett's first solo exhibit in New York, she has participated in many group shows in the city and has established a following on the East End of Long Island.

Though Garrett's paintings revel in color and fluidity, she also places

an emphasis on mark-making, doing so with both the precision and playful ease with which a composer might jot notes in a new score or a choreographer's elegant gestures might bring a new dance to life. As the exhibition materials note, before she became a painter, Garrett was professional ballet dancer and her husband, with whom she has collaborated on several theatrical and operatic endeavors, is a composer. The influences of dance and both jazz and classical composition are manifest in her work.

It is not surprising to discover that Garrett's studio gives onto the beach, (She lives year round on Shelter Island), as many of the vibrant, joyful paintings evoke the texture and patterns of light and wind on the surface of open water. In fact, the longer I gazed in particular at her many pieces that are steeped in shades of blue, the more I was brought back to the images from a favorite film, *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, the 1960 documentary juxtaposing performances from the 1958 Newport Jazz Festival with scenes of the that year's America's Cup yacht races. This is especially true of the large-scale oil-on-linen entitled *Tuning Fields 276* (2012) and its smaller acrylic-on-paper brethren *Tuning Fields 224*, *Tuning Fields 246*, and *Tuning Fields 247* (all from 2011).

"When I started the series I was thinking of fields of vibration and how they interact and create harmony with one another," said Garrett after her show's opening when asked about her titles, "And I liked the musical idea behind "tuning" because they are sort of physical fields of movement and vibration." Indeed, there's a rhythmic buzz to these works, almost all of which extend to the edges of the canvas or paper on which they are painting, as if the frames cannot hold the energy they contain.