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The Art of the Dance

The Tuning Fields of Margaret Garrett

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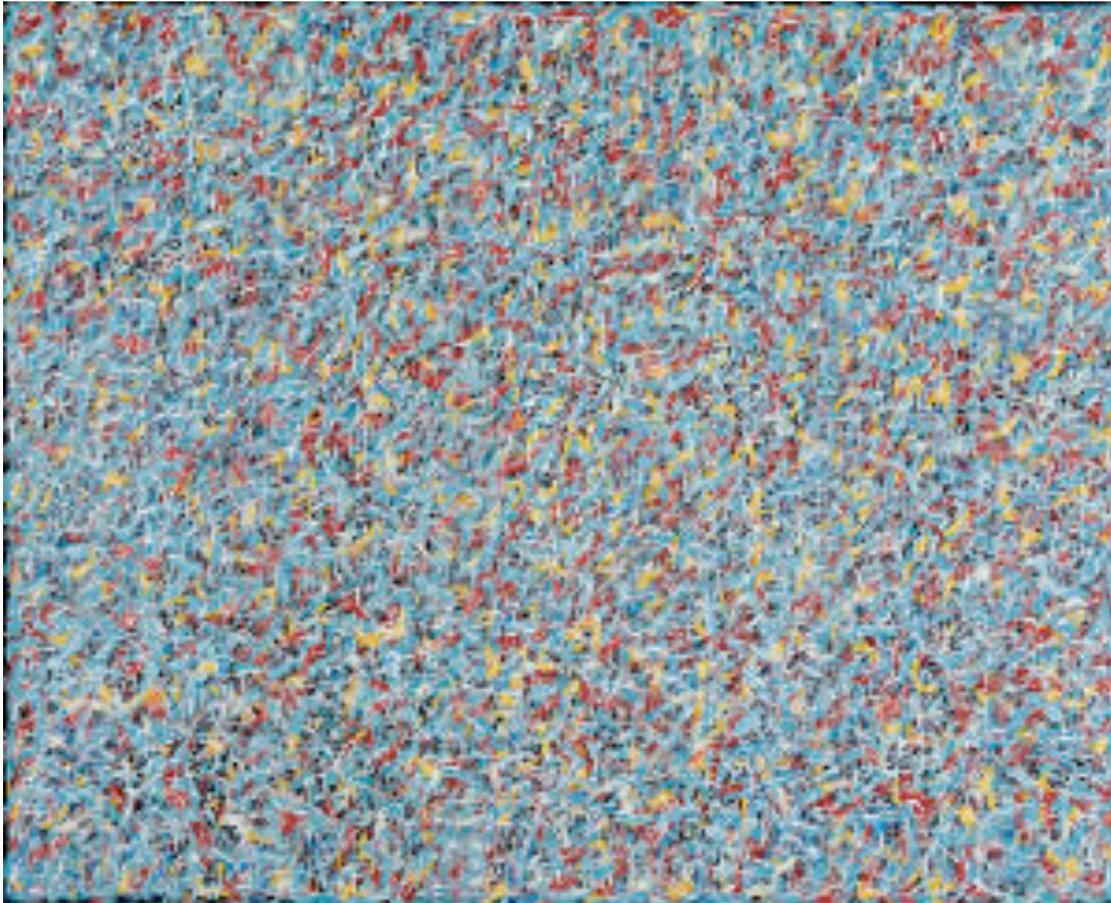
Tuning Fields 246 Acrylic on paper 22.5" x 30"

Margaret Garrett gave up ballet years ago, but she's still dancing. Born in North Carolina and raised in Pennsylvania, Garrett left home at age 16 to dance with the Pennsylvania Ballet Company in Philadelphia. By the time she was 21, she was looking for other avenues of inspiration. While experimenting with other forms of dance and working in the theater world, she was inspired to paint by her then-boyfriend and current husband, musical composer Bruce Wolosoff. It was Wolosoff who turned Garrett on to

the formidable connection between music and color and Garrett hasn't looked back since.

"Bruce felt that color was inspiring to him in his compositions," Garrett recalled. "We went to an art supply store together to get some paints, came home and each made some paintings. Soon I was painting all the time. I had met Thorpe Feidt, a wonderful painter and teacher, through Bruce, and Thorpe agreed to be my teacher. At a certain point painting took over completely and I decided to really commit to becoming an artist. For me, I see the careers as very related. Painting and drawing are just other ways to explore line, movement, communication and performance."

The blank canvas has become Garrett's stage and her deft, dense brushstrokes have become a fluid series of intricate steps, turns and leaps. This extension of rhythm and motion flows freely through her *Tuning Fields* series, which will be on display in her first solo exhibit at the Birnam Wood Gallery in New York City through the middle of February.



Tuning Fields 296
Oil on linen 60" x 74"

The Shelter Island-based abstractionist's series (cultivated since 2008) uses oil, acrylic, paper and linen to create canvasses bathed in rich background blues, purples and reds. Over these vast blankets of color, she deftly weaves detailed and intricate patterns governed by a sense of structure that she imposes on the work through detailed repetition of color and form. The result is a collection of works that not only breathes deeply with a sense of endless time and space, but also conveys the meticulous and intricate natural order that surrounds us.

"The work is at the same time formal and loose," said Garrett. "There is an improvisational feeling about the pieces and in the drawing, but at the same time I set up certain rules within each piece, a kind of gesture or color world. I am very aware of the overall rhythm as well, as a deep rhythm serves as the underpinning of every work. That is very important to me."

Garrett was attracted to the intersection of cosmic, musical and artistic vibrations when naming the collection; *Tuning Fields* readily articulates this textured relationship between painting and music. The series has a cohesion through which you can "see the sounds" of an orchestra in mid-flight, finely tuned, hitting its marks with passion, while each player adds just a hint of personal flair to the concerto.

"Music and abstract painting share a language. So I find it to be a good way to describe what I am working on: The tonalities, harmonies, rhythms, counterpoint, textures. It's how I feel the paintings," Garrett said.

It's a feeling that translates. *Turning Fields 279* is rich with burgundies and plummy hues, velvety swoons of cello and bassoon. Within that space, languid figures that could be silvery schools of fish or swooning flocks of terns dart about in their sublime rank and file, a brilliant, fluttering mass migration. *Fields 302* evokes the spirit of Monet as Garrett's staccato brushstrokes imply beds of impressionistic flowers floating breezily against tympani-sized ponds of purple. *Tuning Fields 152* also goes deep within; its pinkish reds set against soft white are a mellow interpretation of the human circulatory system, inviting you to listen to the sound of your own heartbeat, the most vital rhythm of all.

"I am interested in the vibrational nature of things, said Garrett. "I sometimes feel like, for me, these paintings are depicting that unseen world. As I work up the layers, I can feel when the pieces start to have an energy. Calm, floating or more charged."

With any piece in the *Tuning Fields* series, step in closely to scrutinize and many lives' worth of intricate point and counterpoints reveal themselves. Step back to breathe and the works encourage a spiritual drift, deep ooms of space, sky and water. Garrett works on the fine line that pushes past impressionism and into the abstract. Her works shine and shimmer, giving us a sense of what is and what could be. And then they float away.

Margaret Garrett: *Tuning Fields* is showing at Birnam Wood Gallery, 514 West 24th Street, Manhattan, through February 22nd.

