

## Colorful Exhibition Highlights Abstract Paintings — Inside Art with Michael Rose

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PHOTO: Michael Rose

In the last few weeks of gray and drizzly weather, many Rhode Islanders were looking for a respite from the drab landscape. One antidote is a colorful two artist show on view now through December 2 at Providence Picture Frame's Dryden Gallery in North Providence. Featuring paintings by Lloyd Martin and Stephen Niccolls, the exhibition was curated by local gallerist Jessica Hagen and brings expertly selected abstract artworks to Dryden's crisp and bright gallery space.

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The joint exhibition, titled Conflux, includes paintings with a geometric bent by Martin and canvases that capture amorphous non-representational forms by Niccolls. Though differing in application of paint, in use of line, and in compositional strategy, both of these artists are experts in the arena of color. Martin is a graduate of RISD who has earned seven fellowships from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts while exhibiting his work as far afield as Texas, Idaho, and New Mexico. Niccolls attended UMass Amherst and the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and has shown his work in places throughout New York and the greater northeast. Both painters are represented by guest curator Jessica Hagen's eponymous gallery in Newport.



PHOTO: Michael Rose

The exhibition is an inventive opportunity for an outside gallerist to curate a show in Dryden Gallery's generous exhibition space. Hagen brings to the task her artistic connections and a refined eye. Dryden offers her a space in greater Providence to share work by artists whose practices she is passionate about.

Asked about the partnership, Hagen answers, "Early in the year, Dryden Gallery approached me about the possibility of collaborating. I jumped at the chance, having worked with Providence Picture Frame over the years and knowing that they are committed to excellence, something that I view as essential in the art business. I saw the collaboration as a great opportunity to expand my reach, and I recognized Dryden's expansive exhibition space as the perfect venue for showing the work of Lloyd Martin and Stephen Niccolls. I knew that their colorful, contemporary paintings (many large in scale) would show beautifully in the gallery's voluminous, and light filled expanse."



PHOTO: Michael Rose

Martin's and Niccolls' paintings do indeed show very well at Dryden. Throughout the gallery, the artworks of the pair have been installed in an interwoven way so that viewers are able to compare and contrast artistic approaches along with uses of color, line, and form. In paintings by Nicolls, visitors will find shapes that have a rounded and ambulant quality. His application of paint also offers up textural variations across the surface of each artwork that requires close attention. Martin on the other hand creates lyrical abstractions that hinge on vertical and horizontal lines fashioned into maze-like forms that draw the eye back again and again.

Both artists are exhibiting paintings in a range of sizes. While there are wall-covering canvases that impress, some of the most engaging works on view are those of more intimate scale. Small works by Nicolls effectively compete for attention with his larger canvases, while Martin's "Everywhen" series of paintings, measuring just 12" x 9" each, provides some of the most dazzling passages in the exhibition. There is sumptuous color in works by the duo, which sometimes comes from a punchy red or a subtle and beautiful blue. Whatever the tone, the tonal pairings forged by these artists are enlivening to explore.

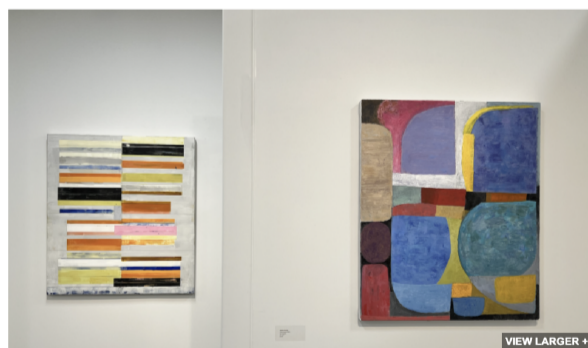


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Asked what she hopes viewers might take away from experiencing the show she put together, Hagen says, "Martin and Nicolls are both highly skilled colorists creating engaging, non-representational compositions. Lloyd Martin's work employs the use of straight lines to wrangle, define and convey areas of color, while Stephen Nicolls makes use of curvilinear shapes to do the same. My hope is that the juxtaposition of these two stylistic approaches results in an exciting, uplifting, and energizing experience for the viewer. That may seem like a lot to ask of an art exhibition, but the response so far seems to prove this out and I couldn't be more pleased. That's the power of art."

The exhibition is a winning collaboration that brings a collection of vibrant and exciting paintings to an inviting space. Steeped in the traditions of abstraction, the show offers opportunities to form new opinions and views as well. For those looking to be elevated by the possibilities of color in contemporary painting, Conflux is a must-see exhibition this fall.

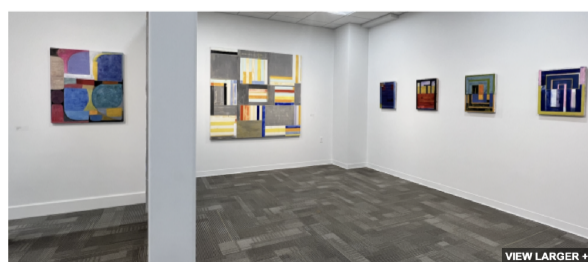


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Conflux, featuring paintings by Lloyd Martin and Stephen Niccolls is on view in Dryden Gallery at Providence Picture Frame at 1350 Mineral Spring Avenue in North Providence. There will be an Artist Reception on Thursday, October 12, from 5:30 - 8:30 pm. Regular gallery hours are Mondays through Saturdays from 9 am - 5 pm each day. To learn more about this exhibition, visit [www.drydengallery.com](http://www.drydengallery.com).



Michael Rose is a multi-talented fine art professional based in Southern New England. Since 2014 he has served as the gallery manager at the historic Providence Art Club, one of the nation's oldest arts organizations. Through his current freelance work he advises collectors and artists, provides appraisal services, teaches, and completes curatorial projects.

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