

ARTIST'S WORK EVOKES 9/11 Experience



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AMERICANS RESPONDED TO THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF September 11, 2001 in many ways. For Hampden Township artist Danielle Charette, it was a day that continues to affect her work. "My brother worked for NPR at the World Trade Center, and when we didn't hear from him for several days after the attacks, you can imagine our anxiety," she says. "We were relieved to learn that he was late to work that day, arriving from the underground to find the buildings engulfed in flames and collapsing shortly thereafter."

Charette, who resided in New York at the time of the attacks, struggled with the emotional aftermath and eventually moved back to her native Pennsylvania in 2003. Back home, 9/11 reawakened in the now 39-year-old woman the need to create art evocative of that experience. For the last eight years, she has done so in prolific fashion.

Although Charette's portfolio includes individual paintings and prints, her signature work is structured around the tableau concept. To wit, a series of mixed-media paintings is produced, each done on Masonite board of the same modest dimensions. "I approach my work

like a fashion designer plans a clothing line," says the artist. "Repetitions of theme, elements, color and design create cohesion throughout the works, with each painting telling a portion of the story."

The paintings explore the subjects of love, heartache, hope, humor and loss. They are iconographic in appearance, with strong design features and a hard-edge style that is interspersed with samples of painterly aptitude.

Charette favors Williamsburg oils for her primary medium, and employs Golden acrylics for foundational colors. She also utilizes Photoshop technology in producing textures and patterns, finding them amongst the common surfaces and mass-produced items of daily life. "I'll find a design or pattern that I like, photograph it and make a print of the image," she explains. "Then it's cut into desired shapes and sizes and placed into the painting."

Several sub-cultures, as well as her French heritage, heavily influence the appearance of her work. Lately, Pennsylvania Dutch imagery has been incorporated. Its stylized design qualities, commonly



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represented by the familiar distelfink and hex signs, fit well with Charette's style. Other elements that find their way into her work include poetry, playing cards, vintage horror films, tattoos, gothic and punk rock music and clowns. About the latter, she says, "Don't ask."

Charette's art skills were initially nurtured at Cumberland Valley High School and time at the defunct Riverside School for the Arts (Harrisburg Arts Magnet). After graduation, she enrolled at the Savannah College of Art and Design as a fine art major. "Instead of helping me to develop my own themes and approaches to art, the

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instructors at Savannah tried to change me," she says. "Naturally, I wasn't happy there, and eventually dropped out." Her next experience, at New York's St. John's University, was favorable. "They were more laid back, and helped me to utilize my own potential."

Charette has studio space at Mechanicsburg's 2nd Floor Gallery, but she spends most of her productive hours at home, where art fills the interior. Her work is found in numerous private and institutional collections throughout the nation, most notably at the National 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York City.

In this region, Charette is represented by the Grey Gallery in Williamsport, Harrisburg Midtown Arts Center, Harrisburg's Gallery at Second, Progressive Galleries of Harrisburg, York and Lancaster and Second Floor Gallery.

To learn more about Danielle Charette and her work, visit charetteart.com.



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