

Detail of Gray Painting

A Driven Artist...
New Paintings by Ellen Hallie Schiff

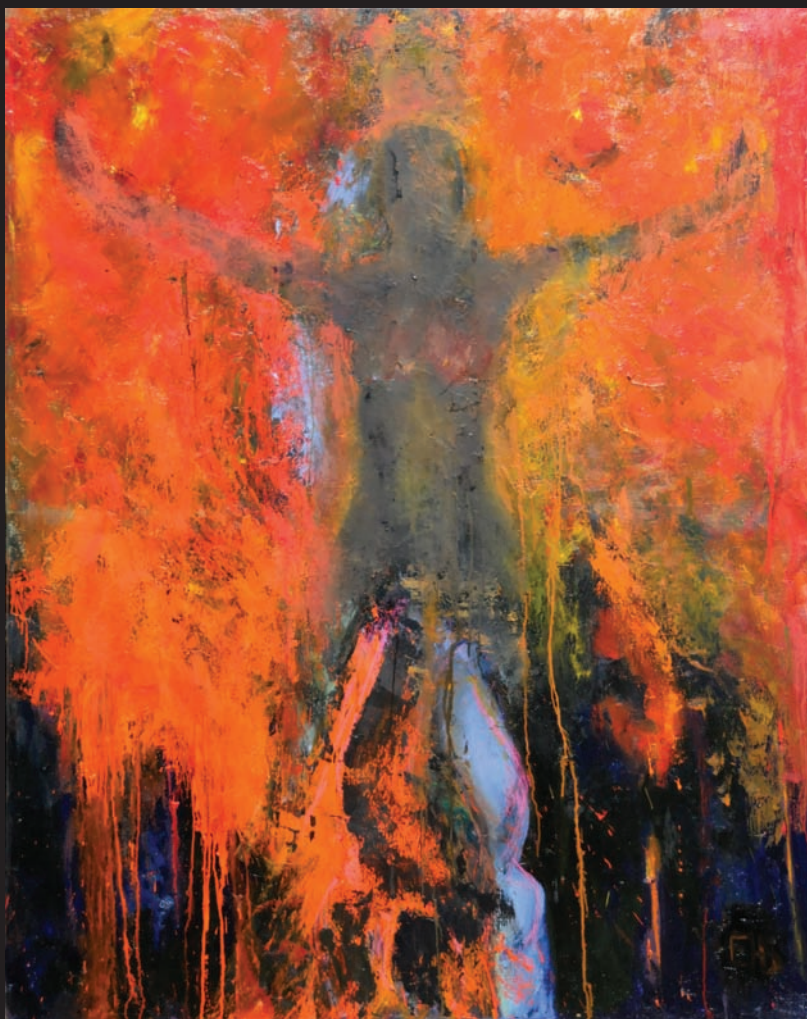
BY LILLIAN LITVACK

I knew a little bit about Ellen Hallie Schiff and her work as a student of Steve Lampasogna's art class at Nassau County Museum of Art. The powerful sensuality of Ellen's oversized canvases struck me in a way I immediately connected to, so I was excited to attend her show at the South Huntington Library. The open, sunlit space was ideal for the strikingly vivid art.

Ellen's work is not shy – the feminine form and psyche is boldly rendered with strong strokes and vivid colors. Even when the human body is not visually apparent in her paintings, the presence of her physical being is always there. Feminine and masculine are juxtaposed, although it is her female perspective that is dominant. In Ellen's work, the physical and the emotional are intricately intertwined, impossible to separate. Her canvases are large, 60 x 48, requiring her to utilize her full body when she paints. The results are both powerful and intimate. Her work draws you in because she has no ego: she is completely transparent and fearless, unafraid to strip her emotions to the core. One feels myriad opposing emotions when viewing this artist's work – fear, frustration, rage, loneliness, disillusionment, searing pain, deep sorrow and ultimately, the extreme joy of being set free. Is the act of creating her art what sets Ellen free or is her art the culmination of the freedom she has achieved as an artist and as importantly, as a woman?

Ellen is blessed with a tall and lanky model's figure. She is comfortable in her own skin and her physicality is evident when you watch the video of her painting: her ease of movement, her ability to stretch the length of the painting—she makes herself part of the painting by throwing herself into the process ... the dripping red paint that every woman understands, the horror of being trapped, ignored, rejected, dismissed and the exhilaration of being reborn. When you look closely, all of the paintings include Ellen in one form or another, sometimes obviously and sometimes deeply under the surface. The colors she utilizes, the oranges and deep blues and reds, are strong and vibrant and raw – her bravery as she literally transfers her emotions to the canvas is inspiring and brought me to tears.

The artist has said of her current exhibition, "The majority of these works, painted during this year, are a series based on one composition that I have found particularly compelling. The series, titled 'Elemental Id,' deals with myself in the world.



Black Figure on Orange

However, in painting these pictures, I hope that I connect with something universal in others. My wish, in part, is to create an emotional response in the viewer, and the emotion does not need to be the emotions that I experienced while painting. Using the paint to help communicate that which cannot be spoken has become endlessly fascinating and thoroughly addictive. I wish never to be cured."

In addition to her current exhibition at the South Huntington Library, Ellen's paintings have been exhibited at various shows over the last 10 years on Long Island and New York with an upcoming show slated for this spring in Laguna Beach. She is the recipient of several Arts Awards and she is a favorite of local and international collectors.

Ellen is every woman, bare and fearless, emerging from the abyss of the fire. You can learn more about Ellen's work by visiting her website at www.ellenhallieschiff.com. You can also contact the artist at 516-603-1931 or email her at ehschiff@yahoo.com. This is an artist to keep your eye on. ●