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## Life in Color

### The work and new studio of painter Joan Gold

BY JASON MARAK

Most would agree that art has the ability to enrich our lives: Great works of visual and performing art can make us keenly aware of what is possible beyond the whitewash of typical daily experience. When we think about where we come into contact with this art, many of us picture austere gallery spaces, venerated museums and concert halls. It is easy to get the sense that these are the most natural, appropriate places for all works of art -- that this is where all artists intend their work to be experienced. This notion is certainly true for some artists, but not all. Some artists, like Humboldt County-based painter Joan Gold, create their work with the hope that it will ultimately be viewed and experienced in more intimate, personal surroundings -- in places much closer to home.

Gold's brightly colored, vibrant, often geometrical, mixed media abstract paintings have certainly appeared in plenty of austere gallery spaces from coast to coast and internationally, but these are not necessarily her ideal venues. "The way I envision my work finally being placed is within homes or offices. I don't really want them in galleries and museums, I want them where people live and work. ... They're meant to be lived with," Gold explained.

Gold studied art as an undergraduate at New York's prestigious Cooper Union and then the Brooklyn Museum Art School in the 1950s. Soon after, Gold moved from her native New York to Venezuela, where she lived for 24 years raising a family and teaching. After a creative lull, she returned to painting full force in her mid-40s and has devoted her life to artistic and aesthetic pursuits ever since. She has been living and working in Humboldt County since 1979.

While her paintings are far from representational, her travels and her current home do affect her work. "Any place that you live is going to affect who you are, but when I close myself in my studio and I do my work it all comes from inside. I'm not responding to anything outside myself, except that as a person living in Humboldt County or Venezuela or in a big city, I'm absorbing the whole experience of the location. This is an enormously beautiful place and Venezuela is incredibly beautiful and I think that kind of feeds one. And then I go into my studio and I don't particularly think about any of it, but I paint what really means something to me at the moment and I think [the work] is

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PAINTING/COLLAGES BY JOAN GOLD

Blue Yellow Green



the sum of my entire life and every place I've ever lived," Gold declared. It is this absorbed sense of beauty that is visible in Gold's pleasing palette, her sense of color and light, and the structure of her work.

Gold recently moved into a new Eureka studio space and she is very happy to be there. "The other space was a little bit smaller and not as well designed. It was actually a little cold for me in the winter and the lighting wasn't as good." The new studio space, a redesigned double garage from a house built in 1936, solves the shortcomings of the old one. Gold's new creative home will be open to the public this weekend as part of the 14th annual North Coast Open Studios.

This is Gold's ninth time participating in the Open Studio event, and she says it has become an experience she looks forward to. "It turns out to be a really sweet time -- seeing old friends and meeting new people." There was, however, a learning curve. Gold discovered early on that it can be challenging "turning a work space into a people-friendly place." But now that she is a veteran participant, she is able to focus on the pleasures of the interaction between artist and viewing public. Discussing what she gets out of the interaction, Gold laughed and said, "Artists and writers are all performers and there are a lot of ways we seek the applause that we want, and for me it's people coming in and just saying something nice about the work. I love to hear it. I really love to hear it. And of course, if I sell things, that kind of helps to pay the rent -- but I would do Open Studio even if there weren't [any sales] because I like the response that I get -- it's very nourishing."

Gold is a prolific painter and visitors to her new work space will be treated to rooms full of her colorful, energetic work of greatly varying sizes, hung, stacked and propped on nearly every surface. Along with the finished paintings and prints, works in progress can also be seen. Gold's studio, at 2320 Albee St. in Eureka, will be open to the public on June 9 and 10 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

In addition to the work that will be on display and for sale during Open Studios, Gold's work is also currently being shown at the new Plaza store (formerly Plaza Design) in Arcata and will be up during June Arts! Arcata and beyond. "I'm going to be kind of like an artist in residence there," Gold explained, with new work rotating in as pieces sell. Gold is happy to have the work up at Plaza, as the environment closely mimics the one she envisions for her paintings -- more home-like, with people coming and going, pleasantly surprised by what they see hanging behind a sofa.

*More information about the 14th Annual North Coast Open Studios event is available online at: [www.northcoastopenstudios.com](http://www.northcoastopenstudios.com). Gold's work can be seen at [www.joangold.com](http://www.joangold.com).*

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