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## Wax Painting Engages the eye and the psyche

by Abby Luby

Painting with hot beeswax is as old as legend. As far back as the 5th century B.C., the Greeks used wax painting for numerous applications including mummy portraits, coloring white marble slabs of buildings and to decorate war ships. But wax painting, known today as encaustic painting or hot wax painting, disappeared from the world for over a millennium until it's resurgence in the 20th century and has been used by such major artists like Nancy Graves, Jasper Johns, Diego Rivera. Now, excellent show of encaustic paintings by artist Mitchell Visoky can

be seen at the Flat Iron Gallery in Peekskill starting September 6th. The show is entitled “The Waxed Surface, A Journey in Encaustics.”

The work in this show is engaging. The sense of movement and gentle fluctuations are elicited by a wide range of layered textures and colors, creating an ethereal quality. Visoky’s deft hand has created many pieces with a mysterious, 3D affect.

“Because you have to heat the wax to melt it, it’s easy to create textures and patterns,” Visoky says. “You have the flexibility of manipulating the medium more and you can create works of realism or are abstract. Ultimately I want people to be intrigued. I want them to wonder what the works are about.”



A Sinking Feeling

In “A Sinking Feeling,” airy globules bubble up, freeing themselves from a wiry grid that is partially hidden under an ochre and bright yellow plume. Countering the gentle, watery textures on the other side are swirls etched into a chocolate and burnt orange vertical stalk, offering the contrast of tension on the one side and the release on the other.

“I wanted the feeling of being in the water,” says Visoky. “Of sinking down, spiraling to bottom of the ocean.” Other works with similar themes are “Going Place III” and “Submerging.”



Going Place III

There are over 45 works in this show, all newly created in the last year and ranging in prices from \$350 to \$1100. Many display numerous variations and different effects of using encaustics, making it easy for viewers to immerse themselves in the work.

Three small paintings entitled “Habitat” are what Visoky calls his “combo” pieces—pairing realism with abstract elements. In “Habitat,” one side reveals a simple house shape, upended, tumbling through a minimal landscape of debris, defying gravity while evoking a remote sense of place. This could be anywhere. Answering the sense of uprooted tumult on the other side is a tranquil respite, replete with golden hues and placid greens. The house theme surfaced from Visoky’s experience teaching art to elementary school students, where the familiar, house image is used frequently in the classroom. “In the painting, I’ve removed the imagery from the landscape and isolated the structure,” he explains.



Mitchell Viksoky in the Flat Iron Gallery



Visoky has exhibited his work widely in Westchester for the last 30 years and lives in White Plains. Has been working with encaustic medium for about six years. Using his extensive printmaking background, Visoky has applied similar techniques such as pressing objects into the wax, forming a more defined surface at different points on the board or paper.

Flat Iron Gallery director Wendie Garber says she's thrilled to show Visoky's work. "These are very engaging for both young and old. They are exemplary in the contemporary use of this medium of encaustics and they will draw the viewer's interest in a different way."

**"The Waxed Surface, A Journey in Encaustics."**

**Sept. 6th-30, 2012**

*Flat Iron Gallery*

*105 So. Division St.*

Peekskill, N.Y. 10566

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Featured image; *Submerged*



**Abby Luby**, author of the recently published e-book *Nuclear Romance*, has been in the field of communications for over 20 years and a journalist just over 10. She has a Bachelor's degree in Communications/Music from Indiana University and attended the High School of Music and Art in New York City. She is a freelance journalist for *The New York Daily News*, a regularly featured art critic for the *Stamford Advocate/Greenwich Time* and for the past five years has written for *The Hudson Valley Table*, a quarterly food magazine. Ms. Luby has contributed several articles on art events, gallery openings and artists in the Hudson Valley region to *Roll Magazine*. [www.abbylu.com](http://www.abbylu.com)