

Three Richmond artists bring their passion for life and art to Reynolds Gallery

By JO LORD Special correspondent | Posted: Wednesday, November 2, 2016 10:30 pm

Sally Bowring. Javier Tapia. Joan Elliott.

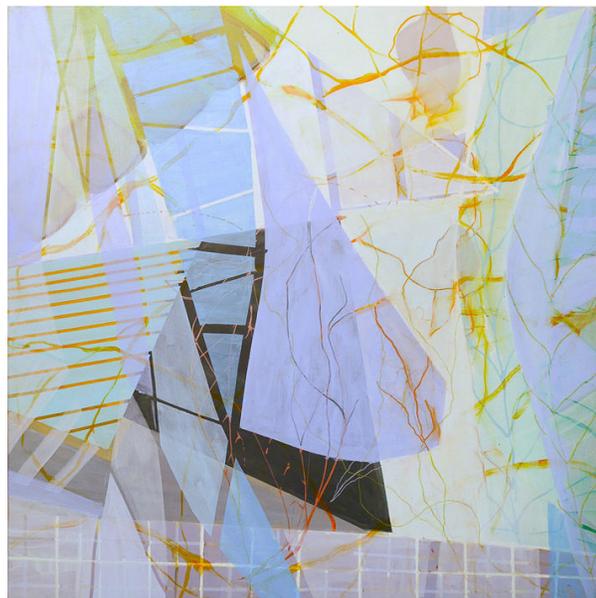
Three prominent Richmond artists with much in common: Each is a longtime fixture on the city's arts scene, each is a passionate arts advocate, and each has a long relationship with Reynolds Gallery in the Fan District, where their most recent works can be seen starting Friday evening, Nov. 4.

What makes the three the ideal combination of artists to exhibit simultaneously at the gallery? "All three produce work that has explosive color," said gallery co-owner Alice Livingston. "They're also an interesting combination because each approaches painting from a different point on the spectrum between abstraction and representation. Javier's work is the most abstract, while Sally blends elements of both styles. Joan's work is the most directly related to observations of landscape and architecture."

Bowring is a professor on the painting faculty at Virginia Commonwealth University. The paintings in her show, "Weather Report," vibrate with energy, communicating the unpredictability of changing weather. The ritual of walking her dogs through her North Side neighborhood every morning informs the paintings.

"I truly believe in being present in as much of my day as possible. From that belief system, I create paintings of small moments that make up life," she said. "I love the mornings and greeting the day with gratitude. This gives me all the inspiration I need to go to the studio and visualize the air, the temperature, the wind, the smells, my moods, the dogs' pace and the sound of their paws hitting the pavement. It's all so amazing and wondrous!"

Like Bowring, Tapia is a professor in the VCU painting department. Julia Monroe, also co-director of



'February Blue' by Sally Bowring

"February Blue" 2016 by Sally Bowring.
On exhibit at Reynolds Gallery Nov. 4-Dec. 23, 2016. Photo by Matthew Phillips

Reynolds Gallery, sees his “larger-than-life” personality expressed in his artwork. “He uses watercolor in an unconventional manner and breaks the rules by layering pigments that traditionally shouldn’t be mixed,” she said. “He’s also not afraid to make really huge paintings that command a space.”

Tapia describes his medium of watercolor as “elusive and chance-based.” He’s always been experimental about pushing the medium in ways he hasn’t seen before. “This has taken me to believe that there is a form of power in inviting the ‘wrong’ in doing my work,” he said. “It’s as if a very important voice that had no previous access is ultimately given a chance to show itself in the work. This voice is the inarticulate self showing through.”

The third artist in the show, Elliott, is a painting instructor at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Studio School. Until now, she’s primarily been known for her landscape paintings. Most of the works in “A New Day,” however, are worlds apart from her rolling fields and mystical forests. “We’ve always loved the intense detail in Joan’s landscape paintings,” said Monroe. “So we were a little shocked — and thrilled — by her new geometric pattern paintings.”

Elliott explained the inspiration for her new pattern-focused work: “I was raised in a fundamentalist Southern Baptist family, and it was through art that my exploration of different world views began.” It was after college that Elliott first began traveling and immersing herself in other cultures and religions. A recent trip to Spain with its Alhambra and Alcazar palaces allowed her to finally see up close the Moorish designs she first came to love from afar. “The new work in this show,” she said, “is the realization of that love experienced and expressed.”