

WEST TO EAST: 'TAKING THE PAINTING OFF THE WALL'

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The fleeting moments around dusk pull Loretta Domaszewski into her element, a world in which she moves quickly across the canvas, bringing abstraction to the sky to bring out not the spectacle of the sunset itself but the quality of light it produces.

That light draws Loretta across the canvas, across the landscape and across the country in pursuit of "the expansive, rugged West" and the "soft and diffused" pastel microcosm of Nantucket.

Loretta reaches for a visual emotion in her art to match the primal, powerful glow of the evening. She tries to answer her own question, "Why are we so moved by that light?"

In order to capture the soft colors and the mood of an illuminating sky, she moves quickly. This quickness is evident in her work. Her strokes and application of the chosen colors capture our eyes and hold our attention.

Loretta Domaszewski is 33. She has lived on Nantucket for 10 years and has spent the last three winters off island exploring new areas. She spent this past winter in Bozeman, Mont. in artist-in-residence. There, she was able to spend long, uninterrupted spans of time on her paintings. "I think it is important for an artist to spend time with his work," she says. "Whenever I travel, I am drawn to the ambiance of the natural environment. My goal is to find the essence of that particular place."

The "Big Sky State" has allowed Loretta to explore open areas, different lights, rugged textures. "Everywhere you go in Montana there are always mountains around you and in between are valleys. When a front moves in, these enormous clouds fill the sky and they make the grandiose mountains look tiny. Then when the clouds are not there, those mountains look huge again." Loretta remarked. "The Montana landscape is a funny play with space."

Loretta found Montana to be very different than Nantucket. "Out in the west, colors are very crisp and there is more contrast of light. My colors were bolder in my work from Montana. Here on Nantucket, colors are soft and diffused because of the moisture in the air."

Loretta noted the expansive sky and the broad reaches of landscape in Montana. It kept her eyes always moving up and down, while on Nantucket they tend to shift on a horizontal plane full of "nooks and crannies."

With the vernal equinox only one day away now, Loretta still feels the influence of a winter out West. "It took me a long time to get used to and appreciate Montana. I think I made a real jump with my work this winter. Now I think I have a confidence in my work that I don't think that I had a few years ago."

Loretta is using new ways to construct her paintings while exploring the landscapes around her. She uses the landscape as a format to translate the concept of her innovative studio art. She has been moving in a more abstract direction with her landscapes. When she becomes bored with painting, she constructs a three dimensional look by sewing and molding pieces of wood or other objects on and around the painting. She wants very much to "take the painting off the wall."

Her work reflects the physical, spiritual, and psychological aspects of a journey through life. "Life is not a destination," she says. "We think there is an end, but we go beyond our goals." Those goals take on their own light in her work. She uses roads and paths with lights beckoning at the end as metaphors for her own quests and journeys.

Loretta describes her work as spontaneous. "The light I try to capture is not always there. It is changing and never constant. So I change in order to better grasp that moment."

"I spend a lot of time on location. There, continual layers of color reveal themselves to me. I tend to saturate my paintings with colors that I see in nature — and exaggerate."

Light evokes a feeling inside Loretta: "When I ask myself why I have this feeling, it becomes one of life's mysteries. That feeling along with the mystery is what keeps me going back to the landscape as a source of inspiration."

Today Loretta is back on the island that exerts a constant pull on her.

"For years I used to paint the salt marshes around the island. Today I live right in the middle of the marshes that I used to paint. That tells me something. I am drawn to Nantucket. I think that I am meant to be here," she says.

Loretta's work captivates the viewer, evolving con-

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stantly and moving in different directions. Loretta doesn't label her style of art. "Labels are for history," she says.