

GALLERIES

# With artist Franklin Evans, an immersive experience

By Cate McQuaid

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Franklin Evans's "circumjacentoffsetloweredredgeredorangeochergray."

Franklin Evans drops viewers into his own weird wonderland. Once you're down the rabbit hole, you may be as awed and dismayed as Alice herself.

Evans has two shows up now, at Montserrat College of Art Gallery and Steven Zevitas Gallery. Walk into his installation at Montserrat, and it's like stepping inside a painting. Colors and lines are everywhere: on walls, on the ceiling and floor; in corridors of vertical strips of colored tape. The same is true, on a more modest scale, at Zevitas.

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It's breathtaking, and daunting. With his hues and gestures, with his art-history references, the artist solidly places us within the rubric of painting. But with most paintings, the viewer regards a discrete object. This one swallows us up. It is much bigger than us, but there are tiny things in it, such as texts too small to read. The effect discombobulates.

Evans engulfs us in his process, too. He starts with writings by minimalist icon Donald Judd, who was a critic attuned to technique. Snippets of Judd's reviews appear throughout both shows, and provide launching points for Evans's painterly meditations. For instance, Judd describes in detail an abstract work of squares within squares, orange at the center and gray on the edges.

High on one wall at Montserrat, Evans has a painting that fits that description. At Zevitas, several discrete paintings, all on unstretched canvas, accompany the installation, and in one, "circumjacentoffsetloweredgeredorangeochergray," the same color scheme arises in a jittery patchwork of images. Although painted, they look photocopied or scanned, groggily blinking with references to artists such as Matisse and Sigmar Polke.

The installations, too, roil with art-history rumination. We're not just inside Evans's painting, we're inside his imagination, which roams compulsively from his childhood to his art idols to naked people, and more.

The artist searches the Internet for images of his paintings, or those of others, and prints them out, no matter the quality. He recycles pictures of previous installations. In his paintings, he may start with a small reproduction of a fraction of a painting by, say, Polke ("polkedots," at Zevitas). He'll zoom in and reproduce repeatedly, then paint what he sees.

In the paintings, the result is clever and visually exciting, but half-chewed, as if Evans hasn't quite integrated his art-history lessons. The installations, while brimming with historical imagery, crackle with originality. They demonstrate how one man's overflowing mind reflects two great rushing rivers of culture — art history and the whitewater of the Internet.

## **Finding common ground**

"Narrative/Non-Narrative: Two Artistic Approaches" at Fort Point Arts Community Gallery starts with the Modernist presumption that there's a gulf between art that tells a story and abstract art, and concludes with the contemporary idea that they have more in common than we thought.

Mario Kon carves into and paints on wood. His lean and compelling abstract designs play with space and perspective. In “After Shock,” he paints precise lines over a black ground — a white grid, red diagonals, a sense of infinite space and also of finite architecture — to which he adds frothy, organic curving threads of red and white.

Beverly Sky’s series of lush, dense fabric collages, “We Shall Not Cease From Exploration: Windows on the Universe,” follows a sweeping narrative, from the Big Bang to Voyager I. One panel considers love and death, in which a dense shower of gold unfurls around a dragon and a rose. She quotes T.S. Eliot: “For history is a pattern/ Of timeless moments.”

Sky and Kon — and maybe all artists — seek to convey that pattern in their work. In the end, Sky’s work is ornate and dreamy, and Kon’s more mathematical. Use pattern, rhythm, and layering, both leave us with a sense of mystery.

## **Capturing nature’s balance**

On paper, the pairing of painter Claudine Bing and photographer Justin Freed seems as unlikely as that of Sky and Kon. Bing paints cosmic abstractions, whirling with glinting disks in the dark, with liberal use of impasto. Freed is a landscape photographer.

Yet these two fit as well, partly because Freed often uses a lens that arcs the horizon line, leading us swiftly from the curvature of our planet to that of Bing’s. Their show at Galatea Fine Art benefits, too, from each artist’s narrow aesthetic focus within multiple mediums.

Freed’s images — in photos, video, and a photographic installation — meditate on the jagged forms of trees, and often the soft caress of water on the shore. His lovely video “Water From Rock” lingers on a dead tree overturned on a beach, as waves rush over the dark tangle of roots. Freed’s patient attention to form urges us to consider nature’s violence, and its gentleness.

Bing’s paintings capture that balance, too, in her rough paint handling and the hint of light in the darkness, although they struck me as pat, their arms wrapping too easily around the universe. I preferred “Planet Fantasies,” metal disks infused with her imagery. Each appears to contain multitudes.



**Claudine Bing’s “Planet Fantasies 1.”**

*More information:*

**FRANKLIN EVANS: Juddrules**

At: Montserrat College of Art Gallery,

23 Essex St., Beverly, through Dec. 13.

978-921-4242, [www.montserrat.edu/galleries](http://www.montserrat.edu/galleries)

**FRANKLIN EVANS: Juddpaintings**

At: Steven Zevitas Gallery, 450 Harrison Ave., through Dec. 13. 617-778-5265,

[www.stevenzevitasgallery.com](http://www.stevenzevitasgallery.com)

**NARRATIVE/NON-NARRATIVE:**

**Two Artistic Approaches**

At: Fort Point Arts Community Gallery,

300 Summer St., through Dec. 4.

[617-423-4299](http://617-423-4299), [www.fortpointarts.org](http://www.fortpointarts.org)

**CLAUDINE BING AND JUSTIN FREED:**

**Rhythms of the Universe**

At: Galatea Fine Art, 460 Harrison Ave., through Nov. 30. 617-542-1500,

[www.galateafineart.com](http://www.galateafineart.com)

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