

Reviews, profiles and news about art in Chicago

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Portrait of the Gallery: EC Gallery

Galleries & Museums, West Loop

Nestled in the trendy West Loop-Fulton Market District is one of the city's newest delights, Ewa Czeremuszkin's EC Gallery. Here, where the cool mesh with the seasonal; here, where Oprah works and hosts her tent show, Ms. Czeremuszkin grows her dream. In less than a year she has presented one group and four solo exhibitions of new and mid-career abstract painters. Most happen to be either Polish, like her, or trained at academies in Poland.

Czeremuszkin, a graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Wroclaw, Poland, holds a masters degree in painting. The simple elegance of the petite EC Gallery, approximately eighteen-foot square, adjoins her studio, and is "a dream of mine being fulfilled," she says. "This is my life. As an artist I wanted to promote other artists, given the difficulty of placing in galleries. I have selected those who, in my view, merit an exhibition." She continues, "I have connections and knowledge of European artists who've shown in Europe, but not here. So it's an opportunity both for them to show in the U.S. and for a U.S. audience to see their work."

One painter to whom the EC has given voice is the prolific Swiss artist Tadeusz Bilecki. Trained at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow, Poland, his bold colors and large format paintings illuminated the intimate space with just six works. "The Apparition of a Geisha Suite," with its visibly over-painted, layered compositions of acrylics on translucent polyester and paper, filled and enlivened the walls of the 'gallery box' with its vaulted ceiling. "I saw his work as something that was fresh, different. I'd never seen something like that. It is close to my vision for the place," Czeremuszkin commented.

Currently works by Jola Jastrzab, another Academy of Fine Arts, Krakow alumni, decorate the exposed brick walls of the gallery. Her minimalist-abstracts hold few lines and singular color. They strive to electrify a style of hieroglyphs and allegorical concepts minus the parables that may well define such pieces. Her brush strokes tend to bash the canvas and paper, with such works fitting well, in both style and substance in this hip, up-close engagement.

In its brief tenure on the scene, EC has presented the work of Alina Ignatowsky, photographer Paul Kowalow, and a group show including the work of Beata Garanty, Agata Czeremuszkina (Ewa's sister), and Czeremuszkina herself, whose ethereal work has clear influences of Rothko and Cy Twombly.

All art Polish, however, is not her mantra. The artist/dealer backs away from the works of radical artist Artur Zmijewski and his current movement in Poland. "When I look at something, as an aesthetic person, I enjoy looking at the latest stuff, but I don't like sad art, tragedy. Art," she says, "is for people to enjoy. Life is sometimes so sad, people should have something to enjoy."

Big plans for future exhibits are in the works. "I'm always looking for something new, something international, something not shown in other places," she added. "And this location is just great for art. It's close to home," she laughs. (Jeffery McNary)

EC Gallery is located at 215 N. Aberdeen