



## *Chasing Color*: ELLEN DIAMOND

The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach is currently showing a fifty-year retrospective of work by venerable local artist Ellen Diamond. Best known locally for her Florida landscapes and travel scenes of southern Europe, the show will trace the arc of Diamond's career – from early '70s Long Island beach scenes influenced by her father's textural, painterly style, to '80s semi-abstract and "fractured" images, through more representational '90s and early 2000s landscapes.

After painting at home with her father Ben Clements – a professional portrait artist and educator – studying at NYU, and teaching art at every level, Diamond developed her own style, and continued to evolve. Her paintings are displayed in institutions such as the Mayo Clinic and Fidelity Financial, as well as in the homes of many collectors, and she is represented by the Hillary Whitaker Gallery, Ponte Vedra Beach, The Vault in San Marco, and Gallery Vibe in Naples, Florida.

Her classes and workshops at The Cultural Center fill up quickly with loyal, enthusiastic students, as do her artists' trips to the Berkshires and Europe. Diamond's Chasing Color Retrospective is testament to an artist's life well lived.



## Chasing Color: A 50-YEAR RETROSPECTIVE

By Ellen Diamond

As I look back on my journey through these many years as an artist, I see clearly that the color blue is the constant element that appears across my canvases. Cerulean blue, ultramarine blue, Prussian blue, cobalt blue ... there they are ... large blue puddles squeezed out of their tubes and on to my palette.

I've always tried to understand why the color blue calls to me as I begin each new painting. So, recently, I did some Google research on the color blue and its symbolism. I learned that blue represents heaven, loyalty, confidence, calmness, serenity, and stability. It has also been proven to provide a positive effect on the mind and body. Wow ... this truly resonates so strongly with me and I guess that is why the color blue is so much a part of my work. Interestingly, during his Blue Period, Picasso used the color blue to express sadness and loneliness. Clearly, blue can affect every individual differently.

I also love blue because it is the color of both the sea and the sky. The beach is where I love to meditate and enjoy the beauty of the clouds, the sky, and the waves of the ocean as they reach a calm, peaceful rest. My home is filled with cobalt sea glass that my husband and I collected over many years. Much of it sits on the shelves along our windows, allowing the light to reflect through.

My love affair with art began as a young child growing up near the beaches of Brooklyn, New York. My earliest memories are of a home filled with color and the smell of fresh oil paint. My father was an artist. I loved to sit next to him as he painted portraits of elite New Yorkers and I would try to copy his creations with crayons and paper. We would

also take long walks along the beach and I fondly remember how much I enjoyed the sounds and movement of the ocean, and the feel of the crisp winds in the salt air. I suppose that's when my affection for the color blue truly began.

I moved to the beaches of Long Island to raise my family, and this is the setting that inspired my earliest paintings in this exhibit. There are also a few figure paintings which were inspired by my children, as well as paintings of two of my favorite stories from the Old Testament.

As my career continued, I remained inspired by coastal subjects. We spent many summers in Maine where I painted along its rocky coast, the color blue still integral to my work. I found new and exciting subjects in Maine and began experimenting with the use of fracturing shape, introducing it as a new element in my compositions.

As the years went by, my husband, Jay, and I enjoyed European travel where the light of the Mediterranean Sea became an important inspiration for my work. We soon discovered the magnificent flowers and gardens of the south of France and Italy, and that took my work into an exciting new adventure. Vivid bursts of strong bright color became my direction. The flower markets of Provence and the wheat fields of Tuscany also provided subjects that kept my brushes flowing.

Twenty years ago, we moved to Ponte Vedra Beach – a perfect place to complete the circle of my artistic inspiration. I am so grateful for this community – its beautiful beaches, the St. Johns River, the elegant bridges, blue skies, and blue waters. They will forever be part of my passion, my art, my life and my home.

*Chasing Color: A 50-Year Retrospective of Work by Ellen Diamond is on display through Jan. 11 at The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach, 50 Executive Way, 280-0614.*

