

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY



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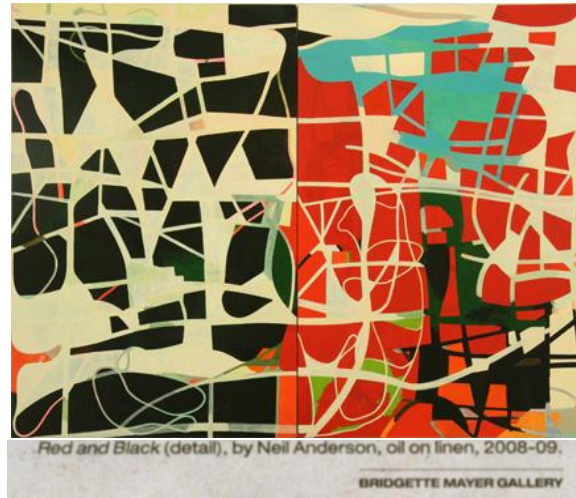
Neil Anderson wakes up every morning and contemplates the texture of the ground directly under his feet. Beginning his workday with this simple ritual represents a personal liberation, only recently won after a half-century of work.

In the grove of trees surrounding his Lewisburg, Pa., home, the 76-year-old abstract painter listens to the gravel shifting underfoot in the cold, still air, and directs his camera at minute slices of, as he puts it, "natural rubble." Back in the studio, the images are projected onto his canvas, usually covering about 14 square feet. That's where works like *Pink Duplex with Reds* and *Apollo 2* and *Red and Black* are born. But, for Anderson, paintings have very little to do with beginnings.

"As John Cage said, 'Begin anywhere,'" he says flatly, sitting in Bridgette Mayer Gallery, where his latest series, "Nightlife & the Divided Plane," will open this week. "You try to devise ways to get started, and it just happens that the way I get started is a lot of photographs of, well, sort of junk on the ground."

Like many of his contemporaries from the '50s and '60s, Anderson is a devout Abstract Expressionist: Ideally, the painting should develop a life and voice beyond any representation of natural forms. He fosters intimate relationships with the canvas over a process of endless tinkering. It can take years for a painting to be "resolved," as he is fond of saying.

"I am simply trying to make objects of visual contemplation that can be understood over a long period of time," he says — and one senses he's had to repeat this exhaustively. "People that are lucky enough to live with them will see them unfold. That's basically what they're about: the experience of looking and seeing over time."



In 1957 he left graduate school at the University of Iowa, determined to live and work in the heart of the Abstract Expressionist movement: New York City. It didn't last long. "I got within striking distance. I sat down next to Franz Kline at the Cedar [Tavern] and tried unsuccessfully to have a conversation," he says. "Bucknell University was really the closest place I could get a job."

Anderson would teach at Bucknell for the next 40 years (1958 to 1999). And in the soil of the central Pennsylvania woods, he would — day by day — uncover the beginnings of his own distinct voice. But other than his experiences at the old Cedar Tavern, Anderson isn't sentimental about much. "Well, it was an income, but ideally I wouldn't have done any of it. The attention that students require ..." he says, pausing to enjoy his own laughter. "Well, it diverts you from your own work."

In the 10 years since his retirement, Anderson has created more paintings than at any other time of his life. "I decided if I'm ever going to really focus on this work, I better ..." but then he stops, searching for a way to express this perfectly. "A great jazz musician once said, 'It's 4 in the afternoon. You better get started.'"