

## Silvana LaCreta Ravena: Artist Statement

Silvana LaCreta Ravena is a versatile painter who works in oils, acrylics, watercolors, and encaustic. (She also creates wearable art.) Her non-encaustic work is both abstract and figurative while the encaustic work is completely abstract. The encaustics, meticulous in their use of color and line, seem at first glimpse to be heavily influenced by Kandinsky and abstract expressionism, especially color field painting. But further acquaintance with Silvana's unique biography and the sources/inspirations behind her oeuvre reveal an artist who has deftly marshaled passion, intellectual rigor, and solid technique to create a genuinely original body of work.

Silvana is originally from Sao Paulo, Brazil and was educated as a psychologist. She also holds degrees in art therapy and art history. A practicing psychotherapist, her experience in the field led to the development of her signature artistic theme: memory. Further study and experimentation led Silvana to develop her own encaustic technique as a vehicle for exploring the subject.

As Silvana discovered, the hot wax used in encaustic painting, with its soft, pliable consistency is an ideal material for expressing the layered nature of memory. Before application, the heat binds the layers of wax to one another, creating a rich and complex surface. Then the wax, combined with pigment, can be literally sculpted upon the canvass, creating an infinite combination of textures. Silvana's nontraditional technique brings further variety to her paintings through the use of custom made colors and additional manipulations of the material. With different wax mixtures, for example, she can give the raw material varying degrees of opacity and translucency.

"This whole art form is reminiscent of the process we use to store memories . . . It's an ancient idea—Socrates considered wax a metaphor for memory," says Silvana. The layers Silvana creates in her paintings are intended to bring the layers of memory to life; the paintings' textures are not merely symbolized, but are present on the canvass. The work is decidedly three-dimensional and demands a live experience—it is impossible to perceive the paintings' rich textures by seeing them online or in print.

Drawing upon her training as a psychologist and academic, she incorporates into her work a variety of theoretical ideas, thus infusing it with another range of textures, beyond the pictorial. Freudian concepts such as the unconscious, repression, and latent/manifest content are especially important to the encaustic paintings. Such a range of influences serves to broaden her work, giving it a more fluid, open-ended character that invites the viewer to appreciate it in his/her own unique way.

The unique combination of elements Silvana LaCreta Ravena brings to her work—artistic, personal, and professional—gives her the credibility of an original. While each individual piece of hers certainly "speaks for itself," when seen in the context of the artist's background, ideas, and singular technique, it clearly gains a degree of vitality and significance that indicates the true measure of the work.

<http://www.silvanaravena.com/SilvanaRavena/About/index.asp>

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RESUME  
BIOGRAPHY

## **A World of Immediacy, Color, and Texture (Artist Statement by Renee Barton)**

I work in mixed media, creating abstract paintings composed of common, industrial materials that come from my immediate environment. Any piece I do is essentially a surrender to my own intuitive processes and an embrace of bold, vivid color, ensuring that the resulting image will be uncalculated, kinetic, and true to my artistic ideal. While I'm driven by a deeply personal aesthetic, I feel that my work resonates with viewers, and somehow expands their sense of beauty, even reveals artistic possibilities of which they may have been previously unaware.

My favorite material to work with is probably encaustic or wax, because of its immediacy and versatility. When I paint with encaustics, I can layer the colors and add (or remove) textures at will, making any modifications/additions "on the fly"—which is simply not possible with regular paint. Also, because it's so malleable, I can easily combine wax with other materials I like: sheetrock, clay, polymer, glass shards, house paint, etc. Encaustic allows for infinite possibilities in real time, which makes it an ideal vehicle for spontaneous expression.

I like to incorporate encaustic as part of my own warped printing techniques. I will, for example, cover a panel with a plastic grid and spray polymer foam (used for insulating pipes) on it. When I press down on the grid, it expands the foam and makes it clay-like. Then, when it hardens, I add the wax.

I use a variety of such techniques as a means of combining disparate materials and for expressing my emotional state, which is fundamentally about the contention between order and chaos. Whether depicted through combinations of incongruent materials, like a grid (order) and foam (chaos); or imagistically, through repetitious patterns and overlapping geometric figures, the basic idea is to show order and chaos sharing the same space, moving/existing in their own contradictory ways.

Another perspective on these overlapping dimensions in my work is that they signify the tension between individual control, as in self-discipline/self-knowledge and volition; and the utter lack of control one has over how others respond to her. This could be a metaphor for the dynamic between the artist and her audience, but my first impulse would be to ascribe this to my own profound shyness, and the fact that it has been instrumental in my becoming an artist. Every piece I do, through my intuitive approach, represents both an act of will and a surrender of control, yet ultimately it is my own; I determine whether it takes form. How the work is perceived, though, is completely out of my control—which I find both thrilling and terrifying.

All speculation aside, I think the ultimate "subject" or "meaning" of my work can be most easily gleaned from the materials themselves, and the unique combinations that form each piece. My primary goal as an artist is to explore the possibilities of common materials and show how they can be beautiful or revelatory. People generally take their everyday environment for granted and don't see the beauty around them, hiding in plain sight—which I find sad; a condition that I've long wanted to affect in a positive way.

A typical response to my work—which I find most rewarding—is when people say, "Where did you get that idea? I never thought of [X common material] in that way." In some small measure, at least, this shows how my work might genuinely stimulate a viewer's imagination and introduce something new to the vocabulary of form.