



# Hyperbolic Nature

Recent Landscapes  
by Lilian Garcia-Roig





*Hyperbolic Nature Diptych: Florida Vines Dyptich, 5' X 8', 2008*  
*Cover: Detail of Hyperbolic Nature Diptych, 5' X 8', 2006*

Exuberant. Ebullient. Energetic. Extravagant. Exciting. The recent landscapes of Lilian Garcia-Roig, an award winning artist and professor at FSU, are all of these. They are overwhelming in their beauty and beguiling in their confident dialogue with the tenets of contemporary art. Jacksonville welcomes the exhibition of these dynamic canvases at two venues: the Museum of Contemporary Art and at the UNF Gallery of Art on the university campus.

*Hyperbolic Nature* at MOCA Jacksonville refers to Garcia-Roig's preference for what she refers to as *maximalist* landscapes. Diametrically opposed to the less is more philosophy, she explains: "All in all, I want the viewer to come away believing that more information, more square footage, more complexity,

more time, more abstraction, more representation, more paint, et cetera, even in a single image, can add up to a more powerful and rewarding visual experience. I believe that one can do more with more and I hope to show how relevant and exciting on-site landscape can be in the world of contemporary painting."<sup>1</sup> *More than a Brush with Nature*, the title of the UNF Gallery of Art exhibition, is a clever nod to Garcia-Roig's commanding technical proficiency honed from years of experience and refinement.

Garcia-Roig is keenly aware that the landscape is seen by many in the contemporary art world to be trite and hackneyed, but asserts that her subject matter is painting itself. The dense landscapes she captures present a variety of demanding formal challenges.

The creation of these works, painted in intense outpourings of energetic physicality over several days of six to eight hour sessions, finds the artist removed from the controlled environment of the studio, exposed to the vicissitudes of heat, wind, rain, insects and rapidly changing conditions.

Where the great star of Impressionism, Claude Monet, strived to capture a singular and fleeting moment as quickly as he could, hoping to record evanescent moments of light, color and atmosphere, Garcia-Roig approaches the quest to render the fourth dimension in another way. Rather than trying to capture Monet's instantaneity, she prefers to reflect the cumulative effects of the changes she observes, including multiple light effects in one painting.

Upon close inspection, the naturalistic and slightly abstract views give way to a dazzling array of

brushstrokes, gestural marks, finger painting and the exposed area of the canvas beneath. The surfaces are thick, multilayered, relief like and encrusted with paint that seems to form its own topography, prompting critic, Jessica Dawson, to claim "the colors [sit] on the surface like slugs, or caterpillars, snakes, excrement or even shoelaces."<sup>2</sup> Details beg for comparisons to fragments of Abstract Expressionist works. The duality of Garcia-Roig's landscapes is in this process of looking *into* a recognizable space with its illusion of extension of depth and then looking *at* the surface that records the artist's energetic and astute response to her immediate environment.

The works at the MOCA exhibition include examples from all three of Garcia-Roig's most recent painting campaigns in Washington State, New England (especially New Hampshire) and Florida. Specific



*Above: Detail of St. Marks Inlet, 40" X 30", 2007*

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*Hyperbolic Nature New England: Fall Paths, 2006*

geographical characteristics assist in identifying the three distinct regions even with the density of trees, leaves and underbrush. The New Hampshire paintings often include the distinctive white birches native to the region while ubiquitous palmettos, live oaks and pine trees inhabit the Florida creations.

Garcia-Roig was never particularly drawn to landscapes for the subject matter alone. Although she admired the landscapes of Turner, Van Gogh and Klimt,

it was more for the quality of the paint with its record of process and application rather than for their verisimilitude. She sees greater similarities in her methods with those of Chuck Close, especially in their shared attempts to capture perceptual experiences. Garcia-Roig is also drawn to German artists. She spent time in Munich in the summer of 2010 and was reacquainted with the rich tradition of German painting including Caspar David Friedrich and his

depictions of the majesty of the landscape; The Blue Rider Group whose members sought to elicit spiritual associations with the landscape; Josef Albers who investigated how complex the perception of color is; and the contemporary masters Gerhard Richter, Neo Rauch and Anselm Kiefer.<sup>3</sup>

Garcia-Roig was a professor in the Department of Art at the University of Texas in Austin for nine

years and has been a professor at Florida State University since 2001. As a high school student, she won numerous awards and competitions, culminating in 1984 when she was a National Scholastic Art Awards Gold Key Finalist and Portfolio Scholarship Winner and had her drawing exhibited in the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. She has continued to receive major awards and residencies including a



State of Florida Individual Artist Grant in 2008, a 2006 Joan Mitchell Foundation Award for Painting, and a 2006 Milton and Sally Avery Fellowship at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, the oldest artist's colony in the U.S. The Joan Mitchell Award is one of the most prestigious honors for a painter in this country. Garcia-Roig acknowledged that it was "a very big deal. It is difficult for an artist living outside of a major art center to get this sort of recognition. It is even harder for a dedicated teacher and faculty member involved in significant service jobs to keep a steady quality of work produced, let alone exhibited and recognized as of top national-level quality. In the art world, teaching isn't seen as a boost to one's national reputation; but...this award...proves that quality teaching and service and ... national-level creative work are not mutually exclusive."<sup>4</sup>

Neither are critical acclaim and popular adulation mutually exclusive. Garcia-Roig's triptych titled *Fall Paths (NH)* turned out to be a favorite at the Huntsville Museum of Art's *Red Clay Survey* show (a biennial of contemporary southern art). It was awarded *First Place* by the juror and also won the *People's Choice Award* from the general audience. This was the first time in the show's long history that both awards had been given to the same work. MOCA Jacksonville and the UNF Gallery of Art are delighted to welcome Lilian Garcia-Roig, an outstanding artist and dedicated professor to our community.

Debra Murphy  
Chair, Department of Art and Design  
University of North Florida



Above: *Thick Web, Washington*, 48" x 36", 2009

Left: *Birch Melt*, 3' x 4', 2006



(Endnotes)

<sup>1</sup> "Lilian Garcia-Roig Exhibits at Valley House Gallery," *Art Knowledge News*, [http://www.artknowledgenews.com/Lilian\\_Garcia-Roig.html](http://www.artknowledgenews.com/Lilian_Garcia-Roig.html).

<sup>2</sup> Jessica Dawson, "A 'Space' that's Filled by History's Shadow," Special to *The Washington Post*, Friday, March 27, 2009, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/03/26/AR2009032603546.html>.

<sup>3</sup> From written correspondence by the artist, October 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Libby Fairhurst, "Two FSU Artists Win Top National Prize in Visual Arts," *FSU News*, <http://www.fsu.edu/news/2006/11/30/visual.arts/>.





*St. Marks Inlet, 40" X 30", 2007*