

**FRIDAY**

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# Life

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## 'A spirit of joy'

Yellow Springs artist  
Katherine Kadish's colorful  
abstract paintings featured  
in Dayton Art Institute  
show. Pages 6-7





# Expressive & Abstract

Artist Katherine Kadish paints imaginary scenes of nature

**"The garden, and nature at large, are perfect metaphors for our own passage through life."**

— From an artist statement by Katherine Kadish

By Meredith Moss  
Staff Writer

**D**AYTON — When she was a little girl growing up in Pittsburgh, she lived with her grandmother and an aunt who was an avid gardener.

Katherine Kadish has never forgotten the colorful nature images of her youth.

"The garden has been important to me since I was a child," says the Yellow Springs-based painter and printmaker. "I think one of my uncles had planted two poplar trees at the foot of the back garden, which, by the time I was living there, were enormous, and shook and glittered in wind and sun. And I can remember the spaces where Auntie planted certain things."

You can view that cherished home and garden as it continues to exist in the heart and mind of an artist. "Home and Garden" is one of many colorful abstract creations featured in the Day-

ton Art Institute exhibition: "Katherine Kadish, Seasons," on display through April 11 in the museum's lower gallery.

Kadish, who works in an 1873 schoolhouse in Clifton — along with the occasional mouse and bat — will talk about her work in a free lecture at 2 p.m. Sunday, March 21, at the museum.

"If I had to describe my work in a few words, I would say it is abstract and expressive, and that the subject is color," Kadish says.

DAI Director Jan Driesbach says the Kadish exhibition of paintings and monotypes is the perfect complement to the museum's temporary "California Impressionism" show that features landscapes painted out-of-doors at the turn-of-the-century.

A monotype is usually made by painting, drawing or rolling paint or ink onto a plate of Plexiglas, glass or metal, and then transferring the image to paper by laying the printing paper on the plate and running it through a press. The most recent monotypes in this exhibition, says Kadish, were printed in this manner while others were made using elements of the silk-screen printing process, with the addition of drawing in oil pastel to the print.

"Both exhibits are about beauty and nature," says Driesbach. "And both convey a spirit of joy."

The difference is that Kadish's flow-

ers and landscapes are completely invented, drawn from "a remembered place, an arrangement of shapes, a particular sky or an emotional state."

"Zinnias (for June)," for instance, was created in memory of a cherished friend named June, who shared a birthday with Kadish.

"She loved strong color, and if ever there was a flower that represents her brightness, warmth and open-heartedness, it seems to me the zinnia is it," says Kadish, who is a gardener and says zinnias are the only annuals she grows.

"As we get older, we begin to lose people really close to us," Kadish has said. "I believe life is completely a transitory thing, and I believe in experiencing each moment of it."

The outdoor scenes she helps viewers experience through her work are actually painted in her studio.

"I like things that suggest things, but don't spell them out," she says, pointing to "Horizons," one of the large paintings on display at the DAI. "These look like flowers, these look like stems. But not like flowers anyone has ever actually seen."

It's color that she truly loves.

"Color touches me most, and I have a visceral need for it," explains Kadish, who spent a year living in China as an artist-in-residence only 10 years after the Maoist period and at the end of the Cultural Revolution. There seemed to be a lack of color everywhere, she remembers.

"The flowers are a vehicle for the colors," she explains, "but they aren't colors you would typically find in nature."

She likes the idea of working two unexpected colors together.





Katherine Kadish works on a painting in her studio at the old schoolhouse in Clifton, Ohio. Kadish has a show at the Dayton Art Institute. Staff photos by Jim Noelker

"In this case, I've combined the lower turquoise with sienna on top and mixed in reds and oranges," she says, approaching "Horizon," one of the paintings on display at the DAI.

"I'm playing with color and color relationships — the effect of one color on another."

Kadish says it's been about color since her student days. She was chosen to attend Saturday art classes at the Carnegie Museum in Pittsburgh at age 9 and studied painting and design at Carnegie Mellon University, then art history at the University of Chicago. She's taught at a number of universities, including Ohio State University, Wright State University and Wittenberg.

Her work is in collections at the Library of Congress, the British Museum, the New York Public Library and the Victoria and Albert Museum.

"I was always interested in the visual world — not so much the fixed things, but things that shifted and changed like shadow and light," she once told a



Katherine Kadish's studio includes hundreds of tubes of paints.

radio interviewer.

In her DAI talk, she'll trace her career as she speaks about how an artist makes choices both intentional and accidental. Her first studio was also an old school building — in Pennsylvania, where the rent was \$10 a month.

Kadish spends about five hours a day in her studio, has exhibited internationally, and is represented in galleries in Richmond, Va., and Charleston, W.Va. Kadish says it's a sign of the times that

three additional galleries that carried her work have closed recently. Her art sells from \$1,200 to \$10,000.

She is married to Robert Fogarty, an American social historian and editor of *The Antioch Review*. Kadish notes proudly that the literary magazine has just been named a finalist for the National Magazine Award in fiction.

It's not unusual for her to paint over her work again and again until she's satisfied. A series is done, she explains,



## How to go

**What:** An intimate gallery talk by artist Katherine Kadish. Her work is featured in "Katherine Kadish, Seasons," on display at the Dayton Art Institute through April 11.

**When:** 2 p.m. Sunday, March 21

**Where:** 456 Belmonte Park N., Dayton

**More info:** DaytonArtInstitute.org

**Artist info:**

www.katherinekadish.com



when she stops having new ideas for it or the work becomes repetitive.

Her subject matter is varied: Inspired by pools and her love of swimming, she created a whole series on swimmers. She's currently working on large paintings, "with hanging boughs and wild grapevines," influenced by walks in Glen Helen Nature Preserve, near her home.

Her process doesn't involve elaborate planning. She simply begins painting.

"I just start putting color down and see what it suggests to me in terms of shapes," she says. "Melons," for example, was inspired by a visit to a Mexican fruit and vegetable market.

You wouldn't know — either from her artwork or by meeting her in person — that Kadish is legally blind. She was diagnosed with macular degeneration at age 17.

She doesn't see it as a disability.

"I don't want it to interfere with my life," says Kadish.

"I'm close to my paintings when I work, and I can see color really well," she says. "My work was always loose. I've always loved playing with shadows and light."

Contact this reporter at (937) 225-2440 or mmoss@DaytonDailyNews.com.

## ONLINE

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Three works by Katherine Kadish: (above) "Seasons Green Tree," 2009; (left) "Pathways 1," 2009; and (below) "House and Garden," 2005-06.



Artwork photos courtesy of Dr. Patrick and Pam Carrol