

CHARLOTTE SMITH
at Cris Worley Fine Arts thru November 11

By Todd Camplin

What does a buildup of paint give you? What do these little dots that repeat and form a greater composition indicate? Are we dealing with challenging abstraction or decorative abstraction? These and many more questions instantly started to pop into my head as I stood in front of Charlotte Smith's paintings.



Lacy Lulu 2017, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 38 inches

The show at Cris Worley Fine Arts contains ten paintings. Most of the works are in the range of 60 to 72 inches in height. Two are 36 inches and one is 24 inches in height. The larger sizes made for a noticeable difference from the last show. Giving more area to play with composition. Some of those dots started to cluster and seem to move like a school of fish. The painting, *So Light*, particularly felt as if the work flowed and had small eddies off to the side of the main groupings. The composition reminded me of the Emergent Theory. In animals like a school fish, you see them act as one organism. Shifting, changing, and moving to feed and protect themselves from

predators. Of course, Smith's little dots of paint don't fear being eaten, but the clustering of her dots simulates a similar effect. Her painted dots indicate movement and imply something emerging. Her paintings imply something bigger and more organized. We just can't see the whole picture.



So Light, 2017, acrylic on canvas,
60h x 36w in

I see this body of work as a type of challenging abstraction, because Smith manages to tap into the feel of the Abstract Expressionist, Jackson Pollock, without attempting at all to copy him. Many artists have tried to copy Pollock's late work and end up with decorative messes. Unlike other artists, Smith and Pollock understand the Chaos of the universe at its roots. When paint drops then patterns are repeated and built up, suddenly an intuitive organization comes out of the Chaos. Like in the work *Off in Space*, this blue background drops and lines of paint harken back to a piece like Pollock's

Cathedral. Only Smith still feels more deliberate and careful, although no less intuitive.



'Off In Space', 2017, acrylic on canvas,
60h x 36w in

Smith is legendary for building up paint surfaces to create sculptural reliefs. These works continue her exploration of allowing paint to build upon the surface. She played with a few more forms in these works, but each painting is methodically slow in her exploration of how much paint to have built up and still work as a painting. This attention to the paint is part of her works appeal. A great example of her build-up technique is the work titled Lacy Lulu. This is the smallest work in the show, coming in at 24 inches in height by 38 inches in

width. However, lots of small pours of paint litter the surface. With lots of dots of red, white, red, white and red laying on the top surface of all those poured paints.



'Dreamscape II', 2017, acrylic on canvas, 36h x 36w in

Charlotte Smith will have a show at Cris Worley Fine Arts until November 11th. Don't miss the William Cannings show of sculptures in the front room which also closes on the 11th.