

On her own terms, always

Miriam Fried is fearless in painting canvases aimed at a place deep inside

By Sue Harrison

BANNER STAFF

Maybe it's her upbringing as the daughter of an opera singer and a pianist, or maybe it's her own sense of certainty in her work, but when Miriam Fried walks into her studio each day, she comes in with purpose, an open mind and a willingness to entertain a bit of wonder. Her paintings and collage will be on exhibit at the Cape Museum of Fine Arts in Dennis from Nov. 1 to Dec. 7. There will be an opening reception for CMFA members from 4 to 6:30 p.m. on Nov. 6.

Fried, with her silver hair and trim shape, shares her studio with her husband Cy Fried, who has recently shifted his attention from photography to painting. They paint almost side-by-side without speaking for hours on end. For 12 years they have lived in a snug house on Conway Street and before that they had a cottage on Franklin St.

Fried recalls when she first was introduced to art back in Fairlawn, N.J. "I had a girlfriend who was an artist," she says. "I went to visit and she had to go somewhere. I found a piece of cardboard, borrowed her paints and painted a picture." Though it did not resemble its intended subject, Fried managed to sell it to her cousin.

"It looked just like her daughter," she says and laughs.

A bit of happy accident and a new career started to materialize. She says she never studied formally, though she did take brief workshops and classes at the Provincetown Art Association once she moved to town. She's self-taught and only works in the abstract. She worked in

collage for a few years, collecting bits and pieces of old cloth at Flyer's Boatyard that she took home, washed and then converted into abstract works. She also did some hard-edged paintings and now is working in a softer set of shapes and colors.

"As you grow, you change," she says. "I could never be happy doing lighthouses or boats. There they are and that's all there is."

Abstracts, she says, let the viewer be touched by recalling something from the past. The paintings are evocative but require the collective memory of the audience to truly come alive. "If it's all spelled out, it can be the most beautiful copper kettle there is but that's all there is. I want the person to get more." She says she respects the artistry and skill used in figurative work but admits, "They put me to sleep."

To meet her definition of abstract, a painting cannot have any element that could be called real. That doesn't mean it shouldn't produce real feelings. It has to. There comes a point in each canvas when she realizes, it's a painting, finally, a painting and she stops and moves on to another canvas.

At her age, 87 on Tuesday, she's not afraid to tell you exactly what she thinks about anything. When asked about her process she says there is no magic, there is only freedom. "I



PHOTO SUE HARRISON

Miriam Fried takes a break on her zebra-patterned sofa in her studio where she is putting the finishing touches on canvases she will display at the Cape Museum of Fine Arts.



"Phenomenon," acrylic on board by Miriam Fried.

just don't give a damn," she says with a wicked grin. "You can't care too much. You can't worry that you won't like it on Tuesday if you paint it today. It's so wonderful to get up in the morning and do what I love to do."

She says she often paints a painting horizontally and then at the last minute flips it to vertical and signs it that way. However it looks best she says. "When it's done, I need to be able to look at it and feel like it says something, that it's not just pretty colors," she says. "I want them



"Peacock Alley" acrylic on wood by Miriam Fried.

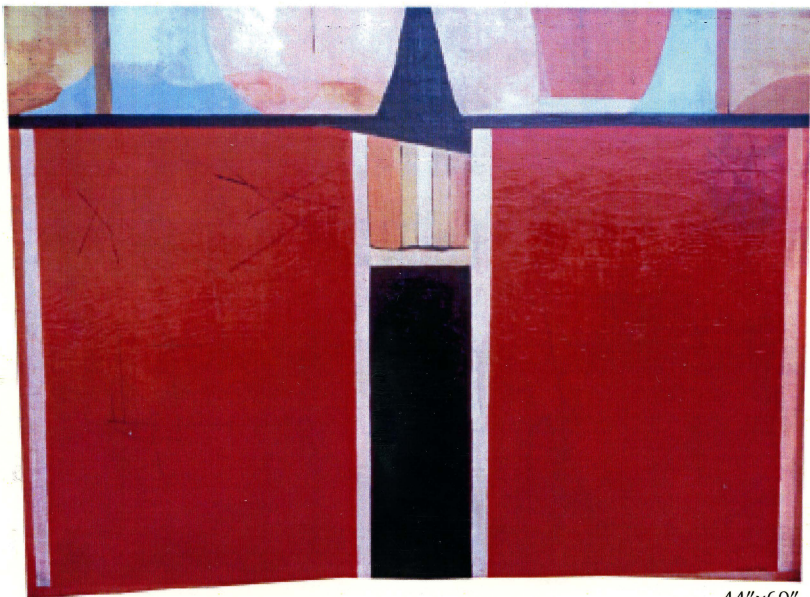
to feel magical. It has to remind you of something but there is no fundamental reason for any part of it. It's just try and try."

Her colors dictate themselves as she goes. She starts with charcoal and roughs in shapes that

please her and then starts putting in color — acrylic only she gave up oils a few years back. "It's hit or miss, really," she says. "When you have been painting so many years, you can't be frightened. ... It's got to be fun or you just torture yourself."

The studio is filled with earlier work, current work, works in progress and even illustrated poetry but most of her work is carefully wrapped and in storage. The CMFA show will bring many of the pieces out in the open.

"It's very exciting to see all the stuff out," she says. "I don't get to see it together very often." But she's as philosophical about that as she is everything else. "You can't do a whole life in one act." □



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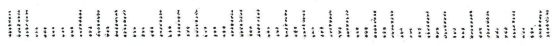
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Artist's Fried, Miriam A#

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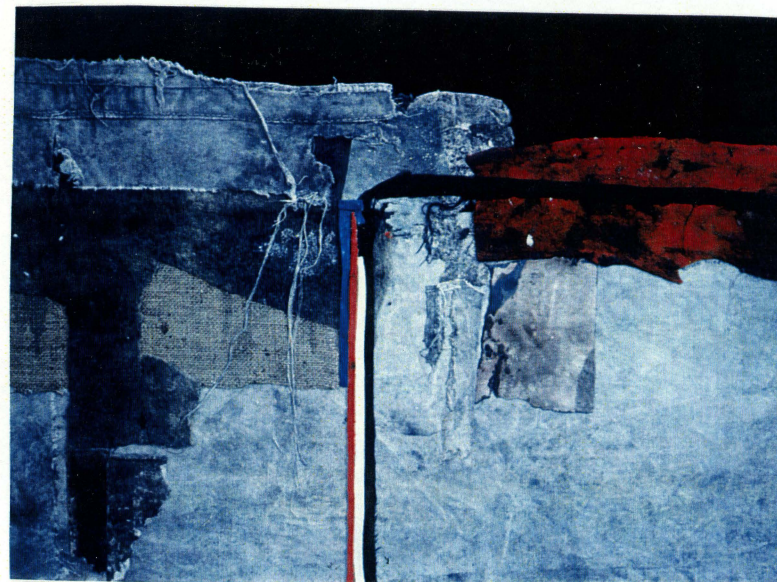
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"Pirate's Cove"

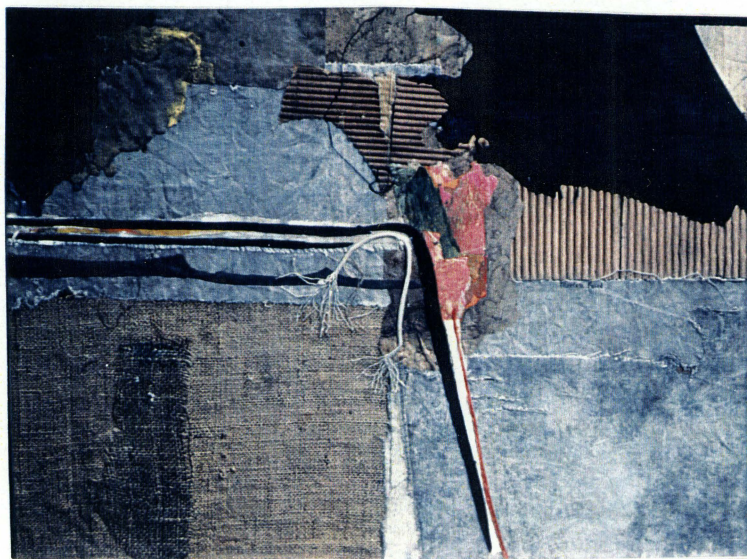
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**Saturday, August 23
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"Breakwater"

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Show Runs Through September 14

**Meet and Talk with the Artist
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