

Richard Melvin

Pittsburgh Native

At the age of three I picked up a pencil and drew my family's living room couch, aka the 'Deacon's Bench' (then the rocking chair). Once this experimentation sated my curiosity, I explored other creative activities and re-discovered fine art when I drew part of my dorm room in business college. After finding a business career unsatisfying, I went back to college for art and graduated with a MA in painting and MFA in sculpture, both from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania.

If I were to categorize my paintings, I would say they are abstract impressionist. When starting a painting I have pictorial and thematic ideas that I want to convey and in the act of painting, I improvise painterly forms. I think my process is analogous to a jazz performer who creates variations of a melody while playing an instrument.

I've studied numerous artistic styles (and artists) but the most significant influence to my development are the paintings of Jean-Paul Riopelle. Riopelle is a French-Canadian abstract impressionist who painted with brushes, sculptural impasto, sprayed lines of paint and, most importantly for my development, paint applied with palette knives - which is my preferred painting technique.

I started painting in 1984 and my first paintings were landscapes. Several of my exhibitions, *Landscapes and Vistas* (Pittsburgh 2005) and *Terrains* (Slippery Rock 2015), mirror my interest in the genre. In this show I featured the paintings *Rule of Thirds 19*, *Classical Landscape* and *Pittsburgh Landscape*. The Rule of Thirds is a 19th century compositional technique to sectionally divide land, sky and water. Rather than divide a canvas into parallel horizontal bands of land, sky and water, like a traditional landscape, I divide paintings vertically with well-defined areas of stripes and textures. Striped area(s) represent the sky or atmospheric conditions whilst the textured area(s) represent the earth and allude to the sky and water. Technically, I paint my 'landscapes' *alla prima* which is a wet-in-wet painting technique. Unlike a French Impressionist landscape, I do not paint *plein air*, out of doors, I paint in a studio. In all, I have been painting with a combination of strips and/or texture over a period of approximately 34 years.