

ETHEL HILLS

Ethel Hills grew up amidst the orchards, fields and hills of rural New Hampshire. While completing her B.A. at the University of New Hampshire, she fell in love with the marshes and beaches of the seacoast region and eventually settled in Hampton.

When asked why she chooses such strong and unusual color palettes for her work, Hill replied, "I use color in many different ways in my work, for its own sake, and for the sheer joy of creating unusual colors. Watercolor is a wonderful medium for creating off beat hues through layering and combining colors. I also use unusual colors to set my work apart from others, and sometimes even turn it into a game, playing colors off against each other. Strong colors can also simplify the composition, making for a stronger painting."

The lush rich colors of her paintings emphasize the liquid character of her watercolor paints. Her compositions are based on the simplified, almost decorative, patterns she developed in earlier paintings of the salt marshes near her home. Although the landscape is her subject matter, the real focus of her art is the medium itself. The paintings reflect her fascination with the unique colors and effects possible in watercolor. Landscape provides the basic design structure, but interesting colors and textures establish the mood in these vibrant paintings.

"People often wonder why I paint the way I do," says Hills. "My own personal bias is a preference for work that is not terribly realistic. When I look at a painting or any other artwork, I want to see the world through the artist's eye, to see something that I can't see on my own. When I was doing more realistic work, I wasn't getting that extra quality in my paintings. I also want the viewer to be able to bring their own memories and experiences to the painting. I think that's one of the advantages of working more abstractly—the paintings become more open to interpretation."

Ethel has been painting seriously for about seven years and is currently pursuing her art career from her studio in downtown Hampton. She is an active member of the Artists' Guild, New Hampshire Art Association, Women's Caucus for Art, Seacoast Artists Association, Newburyport Art Association and the Lamprey Arts & Culture Alliance (LACA). She has exhibited in numerous juried shows in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Maine.