

October 6-12, 2005



Art film: Vincent Romaniello shot collage artist Giuseppe Riviera in his studio at Ninth and Spring Garden.

by Lori Hill

Gallery Siano

Vincent Romaniello says he was out to "zero in on the color palette of Philadelphia in particular" when he approached his recent series of artworks based on urban landscapes. "Lots of blues and browns started coming out. Maybe it has to do with SEPTA, I don't know," he says, laughing. "Concrete, wood, brick was the secondary palette — not just color but age was important."

At Gallery Siano, Romaniello is showing mixed-media assemblages and paintings: abstractions — but not obfuscations — of urban life. It's all about textures, wood grains and coats of paint, much like the patched-together, mismatched-wood doors and layers of graffiti around the city. "It has a beauty of its own," he says.

What started as a solo project for Romaniello soon ballooned. In this quest to represent the urban environment, he thought he ought to see what other artists were up to. "A lot of artists I interviewed said, 'I'm inspired by the city and things I find in the street, sides of old buildings,'" says Romaniello. "And everybody's work comes out differently even though we seem to be inspired by the same things."

So he took a digital camera and started to film artists at work.

"Truthfully I'm frustrated by the lack of media for artists in general, especially broadcast," he says. "I don't understand why broadcast media can't take a camera crew out to First Friday every once in a while." He says instead of complaining, he decided to "do my bit."

His bit allows us to see Tim McFarlane walking up the steps to his Old City studio and getting down to work on his colorful canvases. We see Douglas Witmer talking about growing up in rural Mennonite Lancaster County, nailing work to his walls, playing with his dog. We see Tremain Smith driving through her Cobbs Creek neighborhood to show us a community mural she completed with local kids. The other artists — Susan Hagen, Anthony DeMelas, David Foss, Giuseppe Riviera, Kathryn Pannepacker, Chris Vecchio and Charlotte Yudis — are equally open and articulate about their projects. It's a rare and wonderful thing to see artists talking about their life's work, an opportunity to see them at their craft and hear, in their own words, what their work means to them and what they want it to mean for us. The videos are available for viewing online: www.inliquid.com/features/urban_canvas/index.html. In person, though, audiences can see not only the videos projected on the walls, but some of the work represented there. Truly, this is an exhibition and project not worth missing.

Urban Canvas," opening reception, Fri., Oct. 7, 6-9 p.m., through Oct. 29, 309 Arch St., 215-629-2940.

The Philadelphia Inquirer

Fri, Oct. 21, 2005

By Edward J. Sozanski
Inquirer Art Critic

Partners in art

"The Urban Canvas" at Gallery Siano is an unusual and intermittently fascinating three-level exhibition built around a group of abstract, mixed-media paintings by Vincent Romaniello.

His latest paintings are supposed to reflect impressions of the urban environment seen close up. Two of the more minimal and alluring canvases, Umber Grid and Ochre Grid, for instance, suggest steel surfaces rusted in subtle, variegated patterns. 13th Street, painted in pale green, blue and gray, suggests a peeling signboard.

These are accompanied by a projected video in which Romaniello interviews area artists about their working methods. Apparently he considers what these artists create to be part of his "urban canvas." Anthony DeMelas, Judith



"Tioga News," mixed media on canvas, is in Vincent Romaniello's show, "The Urban Canvas," at Gallery Siano.

Schaechter and Susan Hagen are among the artists who appear.

The show's third section consists of works by 11 artists whom Romaniello has invited to join him in the exhibition.

In practice, this concoction plays as three separate but tenuously linked presentations, of which the video is the most ingratiating. The gravity should be too weak to hold the pieces together, but the smoothness of Romaniello's video work results in a coherent picture.

Gallery Siano, 309 Arch St. 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursdays through Saturdays. Through Oct. 29. 215-629-2940 or

www.galleriesiano.com.



October calls its own inside

By R.B. Strauss

Well, Gallery Siano has done it again! Their October show is some doozy that people will be talking about for some time. "The Urban Canvas" features paintings by Vincent Romaniello, along with work by a handful of other Philly painters that he has chosen. The opening is on First Friday and the address for Gallery Siano (<http://www.galleriesiano.com>) is 309 Arch Street. Romaniello's progress as a painter has been a visual journey that your humble correspondent has enjoyed for years. Whereas his abstract paintings in the past boasted a serene quality, his muse is now a bit more strident in the best sense of the word.

There is an ocular weight to this work that builds on what Romaniello has already achieved. Previously, his art was grounded in an economic spaciousness. Now, the work is action packed with designs. Still, his palette remains almost ghostlike in its overall color choice. The gestural impulse has come to the fore so that the atmospheric cohesion proves denser now. Romaniello makes art that reflects on a tangible city, with the pull of Philly's streets a cause for celebration.

This art is the result of Romaniello's latest project: Videotaping artists in their studios. Before he enters their domains, his lens captures the buildings, some of them now gone, that share the neighborhood with the artists whose work also graces Gallery Siano this month. The range of guests is intense, including Kathryn Pannepacker, Tremain Smith, Chris Vecchio, and Douglas Witmer. Of course, this is just a sample. "The Urban Canvas" holds fast the spirit of Philadelphia in all its clang and clamor, along with its ease and levity.

Vincent Romaniello

THE UrBAN CanVAS

PAINTINGS, VIDEO, WORKS ON PAPER, WOOD ASSEMBLAGE

Gallery Siano

309 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
215-629-2940
www.galleriesiano.com



City Life, mixed media on canvas, 44x54"



Construction, wood assemblage, 74x66"



Installation view

September 30 - October 29, 2005

Preview, Friday,
September 30, 5:30-8 pm

First Friday Reception,
October 7, 6-9 pm

**Gallery Hours:
Thursday-Saturday 11-6pm**



Grange, mixed media on canvas, 54x64"

This month's exhibition at Gallery Siano presents a variety of works by a number of artists, all brought together by **Vincent Romaniello**, an artist who has moved beyond this solo project to create a collaborative multimedia exhibition.

At the head of the exhibition are Romaniello's paintings, works on paper and wood assemblages. Large in scale, his abstractions are rooted in urban landscapes. The patchwork pattern of old buildings, vibrant graffiti in various states of removal, and the imposing architecture of modern skyscrapers are all inspiration for Romaniello's new work.

For The Urban Canvas, Romaniello has also incorporated a series of video works entitled Artists Varied Stripes. The videos are part of Romanblog, an online series of interviews and demonstrations, filmed, produced and edited by Romaniello that provide the public with a behind the scenes look at local artists, their lives, and their work. What he initially intended to do with these videos was to share the artist's work with a larger audience, while simultaneously fueling his own creativity. What he has succeeded in doing is build a community through video.

So when Romaniello was invited to have a solo exhibition at Gallery Siano, it seemed only natural for him to invite those artists he had created videos with to participate in the exhibition as well. Thanks to Romaniello, the public will also have the opportunity to view work by artists **Chris Ashley, Natale Caccamo, Anna Conti, Anthony DeMelas, Tim McFarlane, Kathryn Pannepacker, Deborah Raven, Giuseppe Riviera, Tremain Smith, Chris Vecchio Ph.D., and Douglas Witmer**. Gallery Siano Director Luella Tripp says "Local artists play an irreplaceable and profoundly important role in any modern cityscape, and Romaniello's chief visionary aim, after all, is to provide the most complete possible representation of the urban environment."

Click on an artist below to watch sample videos from Artists Varied Stripes.

All artwork, outtake photographs and other photographs by © Vincent Romaniello.



For additional information on Vincent Romaniello and Romanblog visit www.vincentromaniello.com/vlog.html or contact Vincent directly at info@vincentromaniello.com.

For additional information on The Urban Canvas, visit www.galleriesiano.com or contact Luella Tripp, Gallery Director at info@galleriesiano.com.

October 2005

artmatters

The Philadelphia Regions Magazine of the Arts

oldcitypreview

by Deborah Kravetz

The big show this month is abstract: **Gallery Siano** takes advantage of its broad expanses and high ceilings to display the large scale works of **Vincent Romaniello: The Urban Canvas**. Romaniello's previous works were also abstract, but on the organic side, reflecting his view of nature. In this sort-of documentation, he studies the environment around him, the urban patchwork in patterns and architecture he has seen while making videos of local artists. The result is heavily geometric, presenting his impressions of a primarily angular landscape, not so much geographically based, but affected by the actual materials of the structures – walls, doors, siding, panels, plaster patches and shadows. While my eye is more attracted to the hazy Grid series, you might prefer the Untitled blocks or stripes, or the specific street locations. Romaniello is sharing the space with several local artists whose work he has videotaped.



MID-ATLANTIC

Installation photograph, Gallery Siano, mixed mediums on canvas, and (far right) wood assemblage, 2005

SPOTLIGHT

GALLERY SIANO

Vincent Romaniello: The Urban Canvas

September 30 - October 29, 2005
Reception, "First Friday", October 7
309 Arch Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106
Gallery Hours: Thursday-Saturday 11-6pm
215-629-2940
www.galleriesiano.com

Vincent Romaniello has widened his artistic scope considerably in his latest exhibition, on view at Gallery Siano this October. He has moved beyond his innovative painterly studies on the relationships between man and nature to include multimedia explorations of his environment.

The sources of all this new inspiration are his travels all over Philadelphia to video local artists in their studios, both to share their work with a larger audience and to fire his own creativity. While en route to these various locations, Romaniello became captivated by the images of urban modernity all around him: patchwork patterns on old buildings, vibrant graffiti in various states of removal, and the imposing architecture of the modern skyscraper. These images have been adapted (and in many cases abstracted) on to the canvas, and translated into his own style, in which rich and thick hues

of paint swirl and dance across the surface of the canvas amidst rigid geometric structures. This dichotomy is one that Romaniello has explored for years, yet the emphasis on urban imagery is wholly new. Many of these dilapidated locales have since been refurbished, renovated, or razed, underscoring the importance of his documentation. Philadelphia's landscape is transient and truly evolving, and these captured images serve as vital reminders of the space we inhabit.

Additionally, a number of the artists that Romaniello has videotaped will display their work at October's show, at his invitation. Local artists play an irreplaceable and profoundly important role in any modern cityscape, and Romaniello's chief visionary aim, after all, is to provide the most complete possible representation of the urban environment. To this end, he has created an online blog that features many of the artists he filmed, further evidence of his commitment to the local arts scene. In his latest show, he invites the viewer to share in this feedback loop of observation, reflection, inspiration, documentation, and creation.

Featured on www.inliquid.com nonprofit art hub



First Friday Spotlight

By: R.B. Strauss

rstrauss@aroundphilly.com

Well, Gallery Siano has done it again. Their October show is one that people will be talking about for some time. **"The Urban Canvas"** features paintings by **Vincent Romaniello**, along with work by a handful of other Philly painters that he has chosen. Romaniello's progress as a painter has been a visual journey that your humble correspondent has enjoyed for years. Whereas his abstract paintings in the past boasted a serene quality, his muse is now a bit more strident in the best sense of the word. The opening is on First Friday at Gallery Siano (309 Arch St., 215.629.2940).

<http://thinkingaboutart.blogs.com/>

Thinking About Art

What makes art good? What makes good art?

Wednesday, October 05, 2005 in Artists Interview Artists | [Permalink](#) | [Comments \(3\)](#) | [TrackBack \(0\)](#)

Miscellaneous

I need to do more frequent miscellaneous posts so that I can share some brief things with you as I come across them. Here are a few:

1) When I posted recently about George Morrison's show at NMAI, I received a pleasant email from Philly-based artist, [Vincent Romaniello](#). Vince shared with me the surprise he got (similar to mine) when he saw Morrison's wooden pieces. Vince shared an image of a piece he made some time ago that was quite similar:



Construction
Wood assemblage, collage
74" x 64"
2005

Though I haven't seen this assemblage in person, I am immediately much more drawn to it than Morrison's work. Here there is clearly much more space. The individual pieces of wood are allowed to stand on their own and shine. The differences and similarities between the woods can be appreciated. The piece is also much more ambiguous I think. Further, I see a lot of Sean Scully in this piece and I like that. Though both Romaniello and Morrison make wood assemblages, they come to it from very different points of view and ultimately create distinct art.

After receiving Vince's email I browsed his art blog. What I found was a pleasant surprise. Vince doesn't write much about art but instead posts videos and slideshows. Sometimes these are artist interviews, or video from an opening or a slideshow of a show he visited. He even includes music for each piece. I think this is an interesting new format for art blogs and I think you should check it out. It'll help you (non-Philly readers that is) to get a better sense of what is going on there.

Look, See

Posted by chrisashley at 05:52 PM

September 28, 2005

Interview with Vincent Romaniello

Vincent Romaniello's exhibit at [Gallery Siano](#)— [The Urban Canvas](#) (September 30 – October 29, 2005)— is a genuine tour de force. Most importantly, it is a solo exhibition of a significant new body of work consisting of paintings, assemblages, and works on paper, all influenced by the structures, colors, surfaces, and layers found in urban environments in general, but particularly in Philadelphia, near where he lives.

The gallery is also showing videos that Vince makes about artists and their work and [streams from his website](#), a generous act that puts the spotlight on others and makes an important documentary and educational contribution to the art scene. At the same time, Gallery Siano also hosts a group exhibition co-curated and organized by Vince that includes invited artists from the videos and the weblogging world, further proof of his commitment to creating opportunities for colleagues (full disclosure: I am included in the group show).

For more information and images please see InLiquid's feature article about [The Urban Canvas](#). Links to the different artist videos in the series called Artists Varied Stripes are at the bottom of the page.

The following conversation between Vincent Romaniello and Chris Ashley was conducted via email during August and September, 2005. Vince lives and works in Willow Grove, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. Chris lives and works in Oakland and Berkeley, California.

Chris Ashley: Architecture, or architectural structure, seems pretty central to your most recent work. Is this something that you have used in your painting all along, even in earlier work where it might not be quite as obvious, or is this a newer development?

Vincent Romaniello: It is a fairly recent development, since 9/11 actually. Looking back over my work from the beginning it falls into three major bodies. The first was figurative, in what one writer called an "old masters" style. I found that remark funny, as if you only had to push a button and there you have that style. The second is what I would call atmospheric abstraction. And the third, which includes my current work, is where I combine an organic and a structural element to arrive at what I feel is a better reflection of the world we live in.



CA: Can you break these different bodies of work into specific time periods and locations where you lived?

VR: I think where I lived at a given time could have affected my work, and probably did, but I don't really know. I believe that there are many layers of things that cause my work change. I will give you an example. When I moved to New York City in 1990 I really got serious about painting. When you study painting it is a pretty natural thing to paint the figure, especially in class. You also look at a lot of work from the masters as part of your learning experience. I loved the color of Renaissance paintings and thought I could incorporate that into the modernist imagery that I was doing before I moved there from San Francisco. Instead, I got seduced into the whole humanistic philosophy that went along with the techniques. But I think I was also reacting to New York. I loved it there, but I did miss some of the beauty of California, and New York seemed anything but humanistic, especially when I first got there.

continued on page 2

Now I live in a suburb of Philadelphia and miss the things that large cities have to offer. So again, I am reacting against where I live, or maybe I can see things better when I am removed from them. I find the architecture of the city, both new and old and in transition, inspiring.

CA: How have you moved from one body of work to another?

VR: I don't know exactly. Here is another example: during the attacks of 9/11 I was doing a series based on the four elements- fire, water, air, and earth. By chance, the piece that was to be "fire" had this central shape in the underpainting that reminded me of a large building. The rest of the painting had passages that strongly resembled plumes of smoke. I left this as part of the elements in the series, but in fact it was the first step in a major change that would slowly evolve into what I am doing now.

The very next paintings were three pieces that I called "Smoky Bars on the Silk Road", which were consciously meant to be about the attacks of 9/11. The strongest image that stayed with me from the attacks was that of huge metal beams stuck into the ground with smoke all around them, and I translated that into this set of three paintings.

Realizing that using these hard-edged, straight bars was a major change for me, I began to think about these geometric elements in my work in a more formal sense. I saw that throughout art history, sometimes even in the most idyllic landscapes, straight lines could be found maybe in a farmhouse, a fence, windmills, etc. In portraits you find the subjects posed leaning on a ledge, near a window, or seated at a table. The seamless backdrop is a modern construct.

I thought about structure more and realized that these things were never natural phenomenon, but were only made by humans. This seems obvious, I know, but sometimes the obvious becomes more important in a given context. I then felt like it was escapist to leave out these human-made marks because we have made our presence felt everywhere on this planet and beyond.

You can find structural elements in some of my earlier work, but I wasn't conscious of how important a decision it was to use them at the time.

CA: The idea that these kinds of structures are always human-made is interesting; why do we pursue these kinds of shapes and edges? What draws us to straight lines and corners? We ourselves aren't really straight and hard, although our orientation to the ground is more or less ninety degrees, or at least there is the idea of being perpendicular to the ground while also resisting gravity.

VR: I think we are looking for some kind of order in our lives. After recently seeing the film *Grizzly Man* I wonder now if maybe we are subconsciously afraid of nature. Another movie comes to mind, *Walkabout*, where after being lost and walking around in the outback they finally come upon a house. And you really take notice of the flat surfaces that humans like so much, like a patio or a road, and that our shoes are meant for those flat surfaces. Many of these things are used to tame the earth so it conforms better to our bodies. We make chairs so we can sit comfortably, and we need a flat surface to put the chairs on, and so on.

CA: In another discussion we had you mentioned your theory about the use of hard and straight edges in a painting, and how the actual painting itself doesn't have straight edge. In other words a canvas's surface and edges can actually seem somewhat soft. Can you elaborate on this theory, and talk about how it works in your paintings, or the work of other people that you like?

VR: Most everything I do in my artwork has three aspects. First, there are the formal: things I am thinking about and want to try, or the use of color, contrast, relationships to shapes, etc. Then there are the things that affect me in my life: my family, friends, war and other world issues, and so on. And the third aspect is the unconscious, which I feel I need to use but do not want to control.

Even though most canvases, paper, wood panels and other supports artists use have straight edges, the four sides that make them up, this is entirely different than when you make a straight edge somewhere on the interior of the painting's surface. I think by using a box, line, rule or other straight-edged mark or shape you instantly create order in the work and also signal, on some level, that the human presence is there. I use tape or other tools to make a perfectly straight edge and have to mix the paint to the right consistency so it doesn't move around freely, and this all comes through to

the viewer. I believe we are all hard-wired from when we are born with countless signals we can recognize. One thing all artists hear from non-artists even when they are very young is, "that is great, I can't even draw a straight line." People think if one uses a straight line there is some kind of special talent involved and respect that even if they don't like the image.

If an artist only uses straight-edged shapes they're called geometric artists. The Cubists used them, as did the Futurists, because they knew people would get the feeling of the work being Modern. Before that, if geometric elements were used it was used in a smaller role. People were proud of their achievements in architecture and other technological advances in the Renaissance, but the difference there was that man was still at the center.

CA: I want to follow up on two things you touched upon above- the unconscious and conscious aspects of your art. You specifically mentioned the unconscious as one side of your work, perhaps as a source of some of your subject matter and images, but particularly in relation to how the unconscious is connected to the way that we are "hardwired" to respond to images, marks, space, texture, color, texture, and so on. So I want to ask you about how the unconscious is part of your own creative process and how you make your work

At the same time, you mention various artistic intentions throughout history, which are of course very conscious aspects of making art. Artists do this all the time: "I do this so that the viewer will respond like that." This is something more than formal intentions- it has to do with the subject, meaning, and experience of your work. So aside from the three sides of your work that you mention- the formal, the personal, and the unconscious- is there a fourth side, too, which would be your conscious intentions about the subject, meaning, and look of your work?

VR: The unconscious aspect is openness to feelings and things that are deeper than the surface, and I want to be free enough to let that come out in the work. When I am starting a new series I don't think about all of the different sides at work. I might have a kernel of an idea and work on it. By working I mean I spend a lot of time- days, weeks, months and longer- to try and get something that I am after to work. I will do works on paper for months. When I start I try out a lot of little ideas I have had. The individual paintings or drawings don't seem like they belong to one another at that stage because it is too early for me to focus. Later when I find something I feel has possibilities I can then start working within some parameters. It does take work, and work to me is still a process of discovery.



This is where "conscious intention" comes in, but only after I have worked for a while and can then set up some mental guidelines for myself. Painting has so many possibilities that I feel like I need either a concept or a set of graphic devises before I can create a series. But even then I am still open to new things happening during the process

CA: This newer work you're showing at Gallery Siano seems to combine the more rigid structure with the atmospheric effects of previous work. Is this correct? And your color is definitely more urban, more like concrete and wood, than some of your previous work, especially the earlier work on paper with vertical divisions and brighter color. Is there something about this combination of structure and atmosphere that made you need to identify a different palette?

VR: Yes, this work has both structural and organic elements used together, just like everything around us. I am definitely aware that I made a big change in this new work. It doesn't really take much for the work to look different. The reason this happened is because I wanted to work much larger, and because I felt like the space at Gallery Siano demanded it. That meant that it wasn't practical to work on wood panels. Also, I didn't like the idea of making colored panels and stripes that were six feet tall. But the way the work looks, the subject matter came from the influence of the urban landscape. I am still using hard edges, bars, panels, and organic passages, but I want an exhibition to be an installation, not just a group of individual pieces. When I say organic here, I am including the look of aged materials like concrete, brick, old torn signs, etc. These things come about over a long period of time, made by rust, pollution, weather, and countless other natural processes.

The current work comes from my experience working on videos around the streets of Philadelphia, mostly, and also from Miami, New York, and other places I have lived or visited. When I came back from shooting video in Miami I thought more about how each city seems to have its own palette. The colors that make up Miami was obvious to me, but

I had to think about it more in Philadelphia. I came up with blue and brown as the two main colors. One of the things I find here is that the colors that the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) uses have a big impact. Another place this palette comes from is the fact that large parts of the city are poor, and that the people didn't have the money to update their homes. So we have colors that were used many years ago that are still here; in fact, many from the time Edward Hopper was painting. These were cheap industrial colors like red ochre. I remember hearing that in Siena, Italy the reason the city has so many older buildings than other places in the country is because the plague wiped out a huge number of people and the city and the citizens were too broke to build new buildings, so they restored what they had. In parts of Philadelphia the same thing is happening, and I believe that saving older styles of architecture is a good thing.

CA: In a brief interview elsewhere (<http://falsestart.org/vincetromaniello.html>) you talked about how you first recognized at a very early age that you wanted to be an artist. You drew well, and people admired and encourage that. You also played drums, and you have been involved in many different arts: acting, set design, graphic design, music, painting, sculpting and recently video. How did you move from wanting to become an artist and through all those other arts to where you are now?

VR: I think I became an artist for much the same reason that someone who grows to be seven feet tall ends up playing basketball. You see the possibilities based on how you feel and what others say about your talents, and then you start working. Little by little you get more and more serious, devote more time, sacrifice other things to paint or play music, and before you know it you are hooked. Being an artist takes a lot more work than I thought it would. And it gives back much less than what you put into it, but sometimes there is a reward, even if only you perceive it, and that almost makes it worth it. Many days I ask myself why in the hell do I do this? Making the videos is different though; I learned a lot by doing the videos because they aren't about me. The videos are for showcasing other artists, not myself. They are not about me on many levels. If you ask most people who directed a certain movie, chances are they won't have any idea. When you watch a movie you aren't thinking about the director. Of course in this case I am the cameraman, and I do the sound, editing, interviewing, and so on.

CA: You've been producing videos about local artists and serving them from your own website for over a year now. It's a very generous, community-oriented informational service that you provide, and your focus has been very broad, featuring artists engaged in very different kinds of subject matter and mediums. I'm sure you've gotten a lot out of it as well. I want to ask you about this, but I want to keep the spotlight on you: how has this engagement with a diverse range of artists affected your sense of the purpose of art, the reality of an arts community, and has this had any direct impact on your work in terms of subject, color, size, or your standards of success for your own work?

VR: I don't think that interacting with the artists in their studios has affected my work directly in any of the ways you mentioned- color, subject, size. I have always been motivated and ambitious, and have more ideas than is probably good for me. During the taping it is funny how many artists say they are influenced by the same types of things, but it always comes out in a totally different way in their work. So even if I tried to incorporate something it would come out very different. I have learned technical things about encaustic for instance, but have no desire to use those things, at this point anyway.

The reality of the arts communities here and elsewhere, as far as the videos go, is that I have found the reception tepid. I also have had very little notice or even links from the blogging and vlogging world. I do have a few supporters, and I do appreciate their help in getting the word out so that the artists will get the attention they deserve.

My only agenda is to put the artists in the best light, and to help people understand their work better. Sure, I like hanging out with the artists and seeing their studios, but what I would love to see is more exposure for the artists nationally as well as locally. It is a whole different experience to do something for and about other people, completely different than being alone in the studio working on a painting. I have been fortunate this past year to be able to devote time to this project. I understand that most artists can hardly find time to do their work, let alone do things for other people, but if you can do so I recommend it highly.

CA: You've worked really hard the past few months on a body of work for this show at Gallery Siano in Philadelphia. This show has been even more labor for you because you're also showing the artist videos, and you've organized an accompanying group show. After the show opens you'll have time to catch your breath. I wonder if you have some

sense of what directions your work might go next. After this intense period of working what leads are you likely to follow next?

VR: One of the best reasons to have a show is to get a dialog going with the people who see your work. That is why art criticism can be a good thing, good when it is well done. I hope to get feedback from a wide variety of people who are interested in the arts, and even those who aren't necessarily art lovers. I will ask those people and artists I know what they think is the strongest piece, for instance. I am sure I will continue in this general direction, but because it is a large show I have tried out a lot of new ideas. If it were a smaller space I would have probably done an entirely different series of work. I continued to paint after the show was complete and the few pieces I did were more geometric and less organic. They remind me of graffiti removal but with a lot more happening. But what usually happens is that I have two or three series going at the same time. I heard once that there are two kinds of artists. The vertical artist stays on a course that is pretty straight, and seems to follow a logical progression that is clear. Then there are the horizontal artists who try many different things over their careers. I fall into the second group. I realize that the vertical artists are better rewarded by the gallery and museum systems, but I don't agree with them, and I'll do as Henry Miller wrote, "paint as you like and die happy."

the end Chris Ashley interview