

AMERICAN  
**art**  
COLLECTOR



*Now Showcasing Glass,  
Ceramics & Wood*



B E T S Y E B Y

# Southern spirituals

**B**etsy Eby's move to her husband Bo Bartlett's hometown of Columbus, Georgia, two years ago has increased her awareness of edges. Not only does she see them more in her encaustic painting, as the increased light compared to her previous Seattle home makes them stand out, but they're also more present culturally, in terms of race, religion and politics. It's an influence that comes through in her current collection of more than 15 works at Winston Wächter Fine Art in Seattle.

"In this current body of work, what I've noticed is a greater comfort in expressing color in the work and having the work have a greater contrast to it," Eby says. "I think I'm more comfortable expressing the edges."

A striking example of color and distinct edges is *Montgomery*, spanning nearly 6 feet wide with a dark background and light foreground, the beeswax and dammar crystal mixture topping the canvas evoking a musical journey. Eby's show is called *Southern Spirituals*, and the classically trained pianist practices piano two hours a day and uses classical music as her muse

in the studio.

Her preferred melodies depend on her mood. Up days might call for Handel or Bach, while harder times, such as when her stepson died at the age of 27 this past September, might inspire darker choices, such as Rachmaninoff.

Eby is also influenced by patterns found in nature, as she grew up in Oregon, her father working in the timber industry. Living on the seaside coast and spending time in forests instilled an affinity for nature at a young age. Also, her mother was raised in Neah Bay, Washington, as Eby's grandparents who ran a trading post were the only white family on the reservation. That Native American connection to nature is something that resonates with the artist, and Eby's respect and love for nature is apparent to clients such as Susan Marinello, design director for Susan Marinello Interiors. Marinello says Eby's works add a rich textural quality that energizes a space.

"Personally, I have always connected to her work, perhaps because she dances in nature and captures an energy that feels 'right,' yet

never still," Marinello says. "When you lose yourself in her work, you experience a high level of movement. For me, it is like a warm breeze blowing through my hair."

Now, Eby works in her 3,000-square-foot studio converted from a cotton mill. Bartlett works down the hall and participates with Eby in twice-weekly figure drawing sessions, including a private one for the couple. Compared to the denser and more individualistic area she moved from, Eby says her new home in the South provides a relaxed, welcoming environment she enjoys.

"I often say artists are often starved for light, space and time, and moving down here gave us all these things," Eby says. "It's a different pace down here. The human experience is very beautiful."

That positive influence, and the abundance of light Eby has found in Columbus, is something that excites those at Winston Wächter Fine Art, which has represented Eby since 2001.

"Eby embraces her new home and pushes her palette to convey the warmth of the South," says Jessica Shea, Winston



1  
*Below the Fall Line*,  
encaustic on canvas on  
panel, 58 x 40"

2  
*Balm of Gilead*, encaustic  
on panel, 36 x 36"

3  
*Montgomery*, encaustic  
on canvas on panel,  
55 x 70"

4  
Betsy Eby in her studio.





3

Wächter Fine Art's director of development. "There is something familiar in her blues and peaches, something comforting. She allows the colors to tell the story, while maintaining her signature fluttering strokes. There is a softness and a presence to her work, creating compositions that are simultaneously serene and dynamic."

Eby, whose work will be shown at the Ogden Museum of Southern Art in New Orleans this June, says she strives to create a feeling where music lives in her work. She paints on large dimensions, some up to 14 feet tall, to surprise and impact viewers.

"Art is all about taking you to places you wouldn't normally experience," Eby says. "Somebody once said to me when they saw my work in person for the first time, they said they felt an overwhelming sense of nostalgia. I feel so grateful when people have very personal experiences with the work and that it takes them somewhere emotionally." ●



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