

From Artist to Curator: An Interview with Maxine Taylor by Cara Ober

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Maxine Taylor is a native of California who moved to Maryland more than forty years ago. When she began to paint seriously, she worked with watercolor mentor William “Skip” Lawrence. Later, she moved on to work in a self-taught direction in mixed media. Taylor continues to exhibit in both California and Maryland and her work has been collected across the country, but she has also expanded her professional experience into artist organizations and communities. She was instrumental in the creation of Passageways Artist Studios in Riverdale, MD and a lead participant in the formalization of the Artists’ Gallery in Columbia, MD before moving to her current Baltimore studio in 1997, an old stable which she rehabbed.

This year, Taylor was inspired to broaden her art practice to include a new project: to create an exhibit at her studio as part of the [Artscape Gallery Network](#). Although a number of local artists received BOPA’s call for proposals, Taylor was one of the few who took advantage of the opportunity. The result was *Similar Differences*, curated by

Liza Lee at MAX Gallery, a large group exhibition which examined the scope of painted abstraction in the Baltimore area and included works by Kini Collins, John Cleary, Daniel Herman, Lori Anne Books, Evan Hume, Megin Diamond, Sam Green, John Bodkin, Anne Marchand, Annie Farrar, and Maxine Taylor.

This interview was a chance to assess the success of this new project and to discuss the way a curatorial project can enhance one's solo studio practice.



Taylor's Studio

Cara Ober: How did you get involved with the Artscape Gallery Network this year? What made you want to curate a show in your studio space?

MT: I received an invitation from BOPA to submit a proposal to join the Artscape Gallery Network. I'm always open to opportunities to promote my own work so after determining that, yes, they knew my space was a studio, I prepared a plan of action that was to result in being chosen one of the five Showcase Galleries for the Artscape Gallery Network.

CO: How did you go about putting the show together? How did you select artists? What is the show about?

MT: I invited a group of like-minded women with roots in art, inviting Liza Lee to be curator and write the proposal and Megin Diamond and Kini Collins, who have the necessary experience in the art world, to assist me in putting together the show with Sondheim artists in an interesting exhibit. The only criteria was strong work that was abstract in some way.

We went through a laborious process of looking at all the Sondheim applicants' work online. Two of us went through the lists separately then compared the results and then three of my team selected those we wanted to invite. We came up with about 50 between us which we pared down to 13, and sent out invitations hoping to get at least two artists to accept. Eight responded positively and we, now MAXgallery, decided to put a show together including the eight plus three equally talented local artists.

My immediate thought was bringing together abstract artists who worked in a variety of mediums and whose impressions of the art form were similar, yet different to my own. Unlike realism, abstract art is more dependent on the viewer's impression and what forces (emotional, social, etc.) the artist puts into his/her work. Part of the statement for the show stated that, "*Similar Differences* explores the context different artists have in mind when creating a piece, intersections and divergence that occur in the conveyance, and the interpretations that follow from the viewer."

During the opening reception, pianist Robert Hitz interpreted/translated some of the works into musical compositions. It's one thing to see a painting, but listening to a piece of music inspired by words you think of as you view art is extraordinary. It lent a new dimension to the viewing for the attendees.



CO: For you, how is curating an exhibit different than making the art? What did you learn from this experience?

MT: Curating is a unique challenge, but I drew upon experience gleaned in the past thirty years while hanging my own exhibits both with others and by myself. For me it is easier to be objective about artwork by others. I cannot be objective about my own work for a few years after creation. I have learned to be less critical of my own work although I haven't painted much since this process started in January of 2013 and I am anxious to get back to the painting table. I certainly learned to reach out to other artists, gallerists and curators since I wanted to see their solutions and talk with them about their process.

I had an exceptional lesson when I attended a Tea at Gallerie Myrtis. I would say her standard for sharing and presenting the artists in her show was a model for me to aim for in the future.

I enjoyed using my space as a gallery/performance space and there is potential to continue as such after the Artscape Gallery Network is finished September 1st. I learned how to form a team and rely on others to help plan and execute an event. Funding will be another critical learning area as I'm now retired and on my own. I really enjoyed having other artists share the space and the people who came through seemed to have a great experience. Although I have shared my studio for other events, this experience gave me the courage to develop my own visions on a larger scale.



Painting by Kini Collins

CO: How did your participation in this way enhance your experience of this year's Artscape? How do you think you benefitted as an artist and community member? How is this different than past years for you?

MT: I have always appreciated Artscape as a viewer but last year I began to be aware of the limited opportunities for artists working in traditional mediums, (e.g. painters, collagists, sculptors, photographers). This year I was delighted to be part a broadening opportunity in which more artists and curators could participate through the

sponsorship of Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts (BOPA) and the support of M&T Bank.

I am both honored and proud of the work put into MAXGallery. My participation as a gallery gave me the chance to step out of being the artist (of my own work) and to explore opportunities in the larger community. I intended the *Similar Differences* exhibit to draw a wider audience than my work alone attracts. The big lesson for me is that I need to make the effort to develop relationships with others in the arts community at large, including collectors and journalists in both print and online media by circulating outside of my studio. I have been doing just that for the past six weeks.

To find out more about Maxine Taylor's artwork, visit her website here: <http://www.maxinetaylorfinearts.com>.







[Anne Marchand](#), [Annie Farrar](#), [Baltimore Art Gallery](#), [Baltimore Contemporary Art](#), [Bmoreart](#), [Cara Ober](#), [Daniel Herman](#), [Evan Hume](#), [John Bodkin](#), [John Cleary](#), [Kini Collins](#), [Lori Anne Books](#), [Maxine Taylor](#), [Megin Diamond](#), [Sam Green Interviews](#), [Photos](#), [Professional Development](#)

2 Comments → “From Artist to Curator: An Interview with Maxine Taylor by Cara Ober”

1.



Betsy Wadsworth 2 days ago [Reply](#)

Enjoyed reading about your new venture, and sorry Geoff & I missed it the Artscape show. You do mention Sept. 1 as an end date for the Artscape Network Gallery- is the show still hung at MAXgallery and if so when is it open for viewing?

2.



Rima Schulkind 2 days ago [Reply](#)

Good interview.

Maxine’s mentoring, sharing and structuring her positive energy were apparent in this endeavor. Baltimore is fortunate to count her as a member fo its art community.