



New Look

## Artist profile

### Art fires are burning at 407 Main St.

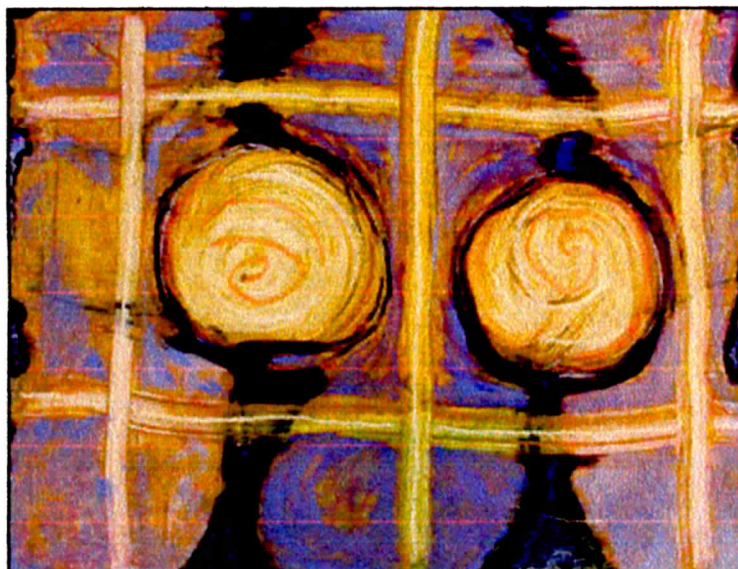
By Shanna McNair

ROCKLAND (Aug 18): "Emovere," from Latin, means emotion; 'e' for out and 'movere,' to move. Painter Stephen Florimbi does this, as an artist might, communicating creative motion by coming from the place of his emotional intuition.

Though he says he was voted "most artistic" in high school back in New Jersey, it took a long time for Florimbi to get to his art and for him to really get inside and become an artist.

He's tried on many different career hats, here studying to be an engineer, there working for the forestry department. But Florimbi always kept the art fires burning. He's been turning out work for more than 20 years now, almost as long as he's been in Maine.

Florimbi will be having a show, "Heads Up," of abstracts and lyric portraits on Aug. 20 from 5 to 8 p.m. More than 40 new works, made in the last year, can be seen at his workspace and studio, Florimbi Studios at 407 Main St. in Rockland where he's kept shop for two years now.



"Apostraphylic."

His artwork is fresh and vivid, using palettes of oil paint and oil pastel mixed with common blenders like Liquin. Florimbi does an "initial painting" when he begins with the gesso, the white paint applied to the surface for sealant. He applies the gesso in lyric washes and when the paint dries, he has a texture to build upon with the color.

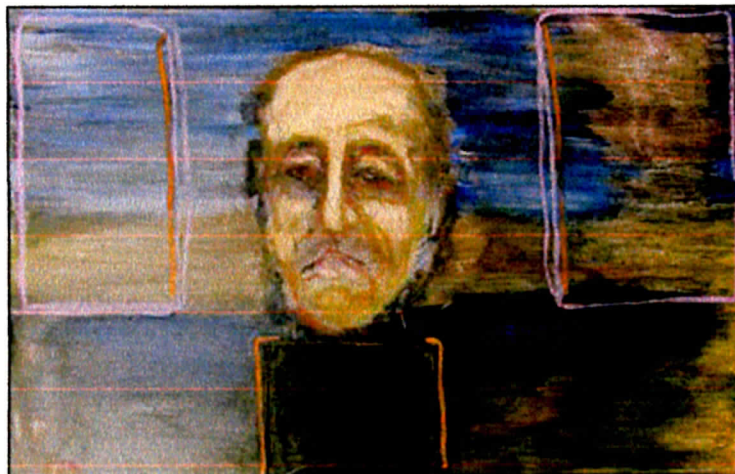
Wash after wash of oil goes on as he "lets the painting happen." At last he makes sharper marks with pastels, offering extra depth and a free feeling within the pieces, like anything can happen. The finish of the pastel lines make the colors of the background vibrate and the depth

of field expand.



"I work with so many layers that -- there are always an inordinate amount of paintings in progress," he said. After awhile, he says he strong-arms himself and finishes them all off, he "works them out."

More Florimbi.



"Pseudomonas."

Along with the sensitivity of color and line, the work is grounded. For instance, his surface is practical; he paints on a fir plywood with paper backing available at any hardware shop. The vivid portraits and abstracts have a heartier feel because of his choice of surface and more desirable – the paintings are whole objects. The traditional varnishing makes the color all the more luminous.

Looking around the room at the prolific body of work he's compiled in just a year, you see a gorgeous eye for color and a raw emotional process throughout. Here, he can close the door and let go of his inhibitions, seek himself, go into his soul. It's easy to see that this is a sacred space he's made for himself.



This ultra-long painting is called "No Keeper."

He doesn't work his portraits from photographs, but from memory, which he likens to dreams. "It's in there," he said, pointing to his head, "it's all there, it's a matter of accessing it." He says he likes the better honesty of that artistic exploration, he doesn't have to try to do anything in particular except be open to what comes out.

"I remind myself that there are no mistakes," said Florimbi. "The thought is so liberating, your vision expands, you can do whatever you want. Some days I trust myself more than others,"

he said, shrugging his shoulders. "But there's no target I'm shooting for at the other end." He says he's simply aiming for a "resolved piece."



"Love's Locked Out," from a series of paintings done in honor of his late dog, "Chaucer." (Images courtesy of Stephen Florimbi)

Tall Florimbi seems right at home in this space and the lovely, sunny studio couldn't be in a more ideal spot – it seems metropolitan almost, perching off the street across from the Black Bear. Other artists work in the building and there is an artist's collective gallery called the "407 Gallery." The light pours in his studio, which has tall, tall ceilings and the kind of ambience that says, "I've been here working, I work here all the time."

But he doesn't work in the daytime, not usually – he comes at night. He's there around three times a week going at it.

"Sometimes I lose track of time. I come here Monday nights, always. I've been here all night before," he said.

Florimbi now works as a carpenter and boat builder. He's taking a four-month leave of absence, not only to work on his art, but to set aside time for another personal project – he and his girlfriend of 17 years will be reconstructing an 1860s house in Rockport.

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Related link:

- [Stephen Florimbi's web site.](#)

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