

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

ART REVIEWS/Helen A. Harrison

**'Sammy Dent:
Organic Abstraction'**

Port Washington Public Library, One Library Drive, Port Washington, (516) 883-4400. Through Jan. 30.

Ms. Dent's large, vibrant canvases carry on the tradition of Abstract Expressionism, with its reliance on spontaneous gesture and its avoidance of representational imagery. The paintings recall those of Helen Frankenthaler, who, like Ms. Dent, contrasts translucent areas of stained pigment with thick calligraphic strokes and linear elements to create forms that float in pictorial space.

Although Ms. Dent describes her aim as achieving a balance between the figurative and the abstract, references to specific subject matter are minimized to the point of dissolution. Her primary subject is color itself, which may or may not coalesce into recognizable objects.

Sometimes the titles offer likely interpretations, as in "Egg," with its suggestion of an embryonic cell dividing within an encircling white enclosure, or in "Life's a Peach," with its fruit-like shape, or in "Jealousy II," in which an aggressive green blob spews its bile at an equally explosive red-orange antagonist.

But more often the titles seem to indicate a place, time or state of mind rather than a subject. "Bangkok," for example, might be an amalgam of impressions created by multicolored cloth banners tossed by a breeze, perhaps something the British-born artist glimpsed during her travels. In "Buddha's Birthday," a floating mass of pink, red and orange, trailing purple tendrils tipped with orange and turquoise, conjures the advent of a brilliant jellyfish rather than the birth of an Asian philosopher.

Whether their titles explain or obscure their meanings, Ms. Dent's paintings can be enjoyed without the benefit of such intimations. Their appeal lies in their gestural verve and the artist's love of chromatic interplay, resulting in imagery that alludes to nature while seldom picturing it.



Janet Nolan's "Twister No. 9," far left, is on view at the Alpan Gallery in Huntington; "Return of the Conquerors" (1899), left, is part of the Teddy Roosevelt show at the Nassau County Museum of Art; and Sammy Dent's "Bangkok" is on display at the Port Washington Public Library.

"Black Thorn" and "Red Ryder," David Geiser wraps references to plant life in blankets of translucent color that refer to the earth, water and sun that nurture the spiky growths.

Two of the artists make imaginative use of recycled materials. Janet Nolan's "Twister No. 9" is a construction of old umbrella frames, stripped of their fabric and crunched together as if by the force of a powerful wind. Their sad carcasses are revitalized by wrappings of colorful, cloth-

covered wire, which transform them from useless relics into a whimsical, Judy Pfaff-inspired sculpture.

Used tea bags provide Gulsen Calik with an unlikely but effective basis for a visual diary, drawn on the bags themselves, which are arranged on the wall like pages from a travel sketchbook. The result, "Voyage to Cai," is a mosaic of ink and watercolor vignettes chronicling encounters on a journey of discovery that is more spiritual than actual.