

ART REVIEW

Bliss found in Egger and Lipsett work

Still Chasing show at Salt Spring Gallery

BY ELIZABETH NOLAN

DRIFTWOOD STAFF

Married couple Kuno Egger and Lisa Lipsett were "Chasing Bliss" with their joint show at the Salt Spring Gallery last fall, and although they've dubbed the follow-up Still Chasing, the pair appears to be in an enviable position, both in their 30-year relationship and their artistic processes.

While the two artists keep separate studio spaces and haven't formally collaborated for the show, there is some cross-influence at work.

"I've been trying to edit more," Lipsett said. "I think I have a fear of missing out — I always put everything into one image. Kuno is so focused. My journey is how to let stuff go."

Working with acrylic, oil stick, water media and cold wax, Lipsett builds up layers on wooden panels and then scrapes it down, a process in which the ultimate end-image becomes clear. She likes to play with the tension of opposites in her abstract paintings, such as between oil stick and watercolour or the theme of fire and water.

Her new works have the feeling of being a little more confident and open than in the past, with some free, sweeping movements among the more careful elements. She embraces her favourite palette of rose quartz and baby blue — a blissful combo indeed, with its overtones of heavenly sky.

Lipsett has created some of the pieces in the current series ovetop older paintings, selecting an image here or there from the past to shine through once the overlaid layers have been scraped away. There is a journey of progression not unlike life — the way one can move forward with new ideas and information, but still circle back to the important lessons of the past.

"It's never starting completely fresh — it's building on what you have. Maybe there's some gold in a past journey that can be brought up," Lipsett said.

Egger has perhaps taken a greater slice of his partner's style into account for his exploration, which involves a new finishing style for his well-crafted functional ware. In the past he has focused on perfecting the terra sigillata technique on stoneware bowls,



PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH NOLAN

Detail from Lisa Lipsett's painting *Hugs & Kisses I*, top, and a vase by Kuno Egger showing the results of his recent journey into new finishing processes.

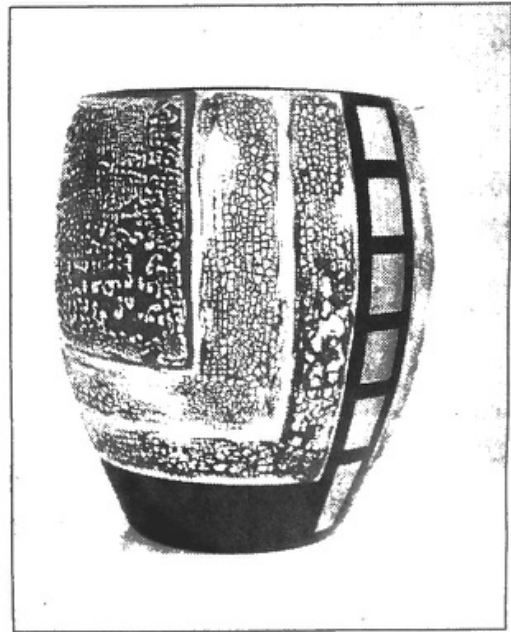
pots and vases.

"Looking at Lisa's work I wanted to push the boundaries, get into abstract and push the boundaries of what a pottery finish can be. I like the way she uses layering, the way she adds material and then removes some or nearly all of it, the way the end result is often completely different from the beginning," Egger said. "Such a process is harder in the world of ceramics mostly because of the constraints and unpredictable alchemy inherent in taking the final product up to 2,200 degrees Fahrenheit."

Another source of inspiration came when Lipsett, Egger and their teenage daughter went to London for spring break this year, with a side trip to St. Ives. The home of the famous Leach Pottery, the town has continued to attract avant-garde ceramic artists.

"Once I saw that I knew I was going to shake up what I was doing," Egger said.

His process started by mirroring one of Lipsett's practices of throwing everything on at once. An early bowl in the series has a black glazed interior and rim, decorated with contrasting geometric panels that are filled with all sorts of colours, textures and



patterning, from oxidized copper intaglio to smooth golden bars.

By the end he was drifting back to something more uniform and subdued, with a design ethic that is graphic and boldly coloured but also incorporates more of his classic terra sigillata colour bubbles. As Egger observes, he had to go the further distance to get back to something that was new and that he was also comfortable with incorporating into his repertoire.

Still Chasing runs until Sept 20. The gallery is open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily.