

## Inside the Artist's Studio: Michelle Mercier

Written by Arlene Chaplin



When you enter Michelle's studio, bold, vivacious colors awaken your senses. Her work shouts freedom of expression. Still, she reserves a section of her studio for teaching and a quiet space in a corner for reflection, reading and dancing when the spirit moves her. It's a place that invites you back to see what's next.

Michelle works primarily with acrylics and mixed media, sometimes integrating collage or oil paints into the piece. Her inspiration comes from vibrant colors, asymmetry and from following the direction of the paint as it takes on its own life. She is an art enthusiast, visiting galleries in spare moments and is influenced by works of Frankenthaler, Rothko, Elaine and Willem de Kooning.

Michelle's first introduction to art did not foster her own artistic voice. She felt stilted by painting realism and turned to other creative techniques such as collage and mosaic. Now, when her inspirations temporarily fade, she eliminates all the rules and expectations and tries something new, allowing the colors and substrates to dictate her new direction.

Michelle earned a B.A. in Communication from UMass Amherst and an MSW from Springfield College. When she completed an Executive Coach Training program at NYU, she started a consultancy where she teaches skills to executives and managers that help them communicate more effectively with peers, become stronger leaders and manage conflict effectively.

Teaching art and coaching business clients enhance her unique ability to connect with people. All her commission work is done on location and closely involves the client so that she can receive an immediate response. She factors in the client's personality and, upon the client's request, may change the color palette or add personal touches such as a handprint or sentimental token. Michelle's passion for working with students and clients draws out their artistic voices and creative visions. Their "AHA!" moments are her inspiration.