

# Dellamarie Parrilli: Bold New Dimensions

By Steve Rockwell

In an interview with Bold Journey Magazine recently, Dellamarie Parrilli stated, "I have been laser focused in exploring that which is 'beyond,' working toward and ultimately breaking the confines of 2D painting." The journey to reach this creative plateau has taken three decades, a search for greater freedom of expression and depth, in a fashion typical of the artist, being ever changing and restlessly experimental. This dogged determination and zeal for her craft has been evidentially part of her DNA from the start.

Parrilli has a penchant for riding at the limit of her medium. Her choice of Abstract Expressionism as a vehicle seemed natural and having arrived at an expressive apex after decades of restless exploration, a question arises. Could there be a historic precedent, say 40 years ago, to where she now finds herself creatively?

In his Norton lectures at Harvard in 1983, Frank Stella suggested that abstract painting was in crisis. After the achievements Mondrian and Color-Field abstraction, painting seemed to lose its way. This crisis, he said, had a parallel at the end of the sixteenth century with the death of Titian, one that was amended by Caravaggio, who invigorated painting with his new treatment of space. For contemporary art, Stella called for a new Caravaggio to fill the void, something pertinent to Parrilli's work at its present juncture, since it strikes at the heart of dimensionality and the treatment of space. The platform that Stella elucidated is one upon which the artist is at home, nested squarely in her wheelhouse.

Stella further observed, that just as Caravaggio reinvigorated painting through his new treatment of space, so too painting's task today is to discover "a new pictoriality," a new sense of space that is not determined by extra-artistic considerations. Here Parrilli answers with her "Beyond 2D" collection of paintings, panels, cubes, and cutouts that create "surfaces over which light ripples and refracts and imagery that appears to be infused with a different level of drama and intensity not attainable through traditional means." A recent visit to Parrilli's studio by critic Peter Frank elicited the excited response, "You are a 3D innovator."

The question bears asking, "Might abstract art have lost its way again as Stella suggested happened 40 years ago?" Certainly, in this age of pluralism awakening to a fresh appreciation of the role that space plays in art might be instructive. It's difficult to deny that the treatment of space has been the driver of all major creative cultural shifts since the Renaissance.



**Soulmates**, 2014,  
mixed media cutout on polycarbon,  
66" highest x 22" widest



Through her recent acrylic on plastic works Parrilli speaks to the heart of these issues. Space and dimensionality is where her studio practice has led. Through the artist's innovative approach, a viewer may "look into and through the painting, into and through the actual layers." Precisely how ambient lighting falls on these acrylic on plastic works from one moment to the next, drives the viewing experiences. The bifurcation of the visual here from two to three dimensions transforms what we see into theater. Parrilli's free-flowing compositions of brush and line may be read as compressed scenes and acts played out from multiple angles. To the extent that the performance of "action" painters like Jackson Pollock elevated the act of painting itself in tandem with the finished work, Parrilli, the painter, is now inseparable from Parrilli, the performer.

Furthermore, Parrilli's Abstract Expressionism, in its grounding of spatial dynamics has a significant precedent in the paintings of Hans Hoffmann as the founding voice of the movement itself. The connection is important. Hoffmann came to understand how color and picture plane might unify a work through a push/pull spatial dynamic, something echoed in Parrilli's signature figure/ground innovations. The artist achieves the effect through a lively counterpoint and contrast of light against dark and line against swaths of pigmentation. The visual gestalt is one of an energetic waft and weave – a visual dance.

"After all, the aim of art is to make space, space that is not compromised by decoration or illustration, space in which the subject of painting can live. This is what painting has always been about." Frank Stella's statement from his 1983 Harvard lectures has a ring of echo in the art of Parrilli. The artist asks, "As humans, are we not inhabiting space with each of us having our own unique multidimensionality: spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical?" The answer, of course, is yes. Imbedded in Parrilli's art is the junction where artist and viewer meet; where art connects to a shared humanity, transcending boundaries of time, culture, and language.

**STEVE ROCKWELL** is primarily known as the publisher of *dArt International* magazine, released in Los Angeles January, 1998. Initially *dArt* found its support through LA International Invitational Biennial art fair and other North American art fairs. *dArt* magazine, however, had roots in art making from the start, having been the spinoff of the 1996 book work "Meditations on Space, An Artist's Odyssey through Art Galleries in Europe and North America. A more recent affirmation of *dArt* and its art roots are the Curated Content projects, which make use of *dArt* magazine print pages.



**Soul Connection**, 2014,  
mixed media cutout on polycarbon,  
66" highest x 30" widest