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Rivergate Ruins, 2009, by Nell C. Tilton. Mixed media on canvas, 36" x 36".



Garden Project, 2011, by Nell C. Tilton. Mixed media on canvas, 60" x 48".

BY KIM HALL

IN HER SEPTEMBER 2011 SHOW *Blueprints: Reflections of Modern Design*, at the Carol Robinson Gallery in New Orleans, artist Nell C. Tilton reflected on "being surrounded and influenced by the contemporary elements of modern architecture" throughout her life. Her father, who was an architect, had a strong influence on her approach to art. She quoted from his memoirs in her artist statement for the show:

"The creative act is a lonely one. A dream occurs in your mind. A dream that seems real. You imagine how the building goes together in plan. You see it in three dimensions in your imagination. You walk around it and through it as if it were already there."

"I love that quote — what it says about creativity, dreams, imagination and seeing a work of art come into existence," explains Tilton. "It seemed appropriate, too, since I was paying homage to his architectural works in this exhibit."

Despite studying art at Newcomb College in New Orleans in the 1960s, when, as she says, "abstract art was in vogue," Tilton did not begin to pursue abstract art until about 15 years ago. During those decades in between, she studied drawing, watercolor, figure study and photography — traditional techniques she felt

she lacked during her earlier education. Eventually, when she began to be drawn toward abstraction, that representational foundation "informed and served" her new direction.

"Most of my abstract work has had an architectural feel from the beginning, partially in response to my late father's profession, his love for his work and the contemporary buildings he designed. One



Nell C. Tilton

of the structures he conceived and designed that was most dear to him, The Rivergate Convention Center in New Orleans, an innovative and unique contemporary structure built in the 1960s, was destroyed due to political maneuvering, just a couple of years before his death. This had a very profound affect on me, and it was not long after this occurrence that I began to experiment with abstraction. This building and some of its elements became a subject, and continues to be a subject in many of my paintings.

"I usually have some theme or inspiration in my mind before beginning a piece, and then cover the canvas rather intuitively, inserting elements of the subject matter. I often work from memories but sometimes with a reference to inspire me. This gives me a start but no telling where the painting will go from there. I do envision what I want to say, but at the same time I'm working out the elements of the painting — line, shapes, color, value — while being aware of establishing a good and strong composition. An enjoyable part of the process is experimenting with the paint, colors, media, etc. as I progress. Sometimes this experimentation works and sometimes not, but I usually learn new things along the way."

Nell C. Tilton's work can be seen at the Carol Robinson Gallery in New Orleans in a group show entitled *Artists of Faith* through April 14. Additionally, Tilton teaches two classes at the New Orleans Academy of Fine Arts, one in the fall and one in the spring. For more information, visit www.nellcilton.com, or like her on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/nellciltonart>. **PA**

Each month, one artist is selected to be featured in "Artist Spotlight." The competition is open to all artists 18 and up who "like" Professional Artist on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, or participate in our LinkedIn discussion group. For details, connect with Professional Artist online.