

Dedicating one's life to art is more than just a commitment of time and energy. In a society where art is undervalued and earning a living by art is a gamble at best, it's a leap of faith. We talked to three local artists to find out how they manage to keep art at the center of their lives.



Jane Eklund

Carol Gove's abstract paintings are inspired by the landscape, still lifes and the interiors of houses.

# Making a life around art

BY JANE EKLUND

## You can come home again

Three years ago, in order to devote more time to artwork, Carol Gove came home. Not just home to Temple, where she grew up, but home to the house where she lived as a child, the house where her parents still live.

At 34, Gove is long out of childhood, so things aren't exactly like the old days. For instance, when she moved back, she brought along her partner, Paul Burba, a software designer. The two of them live in an apartment Paul and her dad built. Gove works in a basement studio that's accessed through a trap door in the kitchen.

"Relocating has really helped my work to grow," she says. That's partly because her expenses are less than they were when she lived

in Cambridge, so instead of working full time as a graphic designer, she works only two and a half days a week and can spend more time in her studio. But the move also brought a change in artistic vision. Being in a familiar place with a new purpose allows her to look at her surroundings with a fresh eye, she says.

She's influenced by landscapes, still lifes, the interiors of homes — images she translates into abstractions. It's a way of synthesizing what she sees. "I'm working to develop a vocabulary of my own language," she says.

Gove works primarily in mixed media collage, layering patches of color and texture on wood. Her choice of "canvas" adds a sculptural element to the work — she's able to scar and cut away at the wood itself. She also uses acrylic paint, charcoal, pencil and occasionally pastel in her work.



'Clearing'

"I like the challenge that the limited reference to something isn't readily available," she says of abstract art. She describes her process as a series of decisions, each one informing the next — a search for "resolution of composition and form," as she puts it in her artist statement. It's a process that involves upheaval and debate, she says; when all the decisions hold together as one expression, she knows she can stop working on that piece.

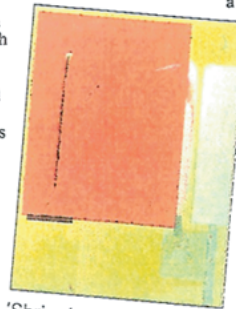
Since she's been back in Temple, her color palette has expanded; she's using larger fields of color and tones. The work is more approachable than her earlier work, she says. It's less dense; its boundaries less distinct.

Gove's also forged the kind of connection with her work and her studio that comes with having time to devote to art. Even on days when she can't work, she goes to her studio to consider what's in process.

"I'm able to pursue my work very

aggressively," she says.

She also gets support and encouragement from the people around her, including her parents, Mary and Albert Gove (her dad, a carpenter, frames all of her work), and Burba, who encouraged her to "just do it," she says.



'Shrine'

The dedication to art is paying off for Gove, who is represented by the prestigious judi rotenberg gallery in Boston and Contemporary Art Now in Cambridge. At a recent two-person show at judi rotenberg, she sold nine of 13 pieces. In the last few years, she's also had three solo shows and exhibited in numerous two-person and group exhibits in galleries in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

"I feel like things are beginning to happen for me," she says. "Things are starting to take off."