

ART

Charlie Sheard

BY John McDonald

His thing.

Abstract paintings in which amorphous shapes float in fields of vivid colour.

Our take.

Charlie Sheard refutes the slander that abstract artists just slap it on. Sheard ran a private studio school for 20 years, in which he instructed students on the painting techniques of the old masters. In terms of expertise, he is one of Australia's most knowledgeable artists.

In his own work, Sheard has pursued the path of pure abstraction, which is arguably more demanding than figurative art. We are so accustomed to looking for recognisable images, we habitually try to read a horizontal picture as a landscape and a vertical one as a portrait. Sheard makes it difficult to pursue such simplistic associations. He sees abstract painting as a discipline which takes a long time to master. When understanding arrives, it is a wisdom born in the body as much as the mind.

Sheard's show at May Space, called *Digonos*, meaning "twice-born", includes works such as *Pure Abstraction [Eldreyik]* or *Pure Abstraction #99*, in which the paint retains the fluid form in which it has been poured and worked. Other pictures, such as *Lytic Poem*, make potent use of a single saturated colour. His paintings may look spontaneous, but often take years to finish. *Can I afford it?*

Sheard has held more than 50 solo exhibitions across Australia, the UK, the USA and China, with the record price for his work \$60,000. In this show, the highest price is \$28,000 for large acrylic paintings on polyester, which measure 198cm x 214cm. Smaller works on paper, like *Pure Abstraction #98* (72cm x 56cm, right) are the least expensive at \$4950. For an artist of his experience, one might expect to pay much more. *Where can I have a squiz?*

May Space, 409b George Street, Waterloo, Sydney, until September 22; mayspace.com.au.

LIVES: **EAST SYDNEY**
AGE: **58**
REPRESENTED BY: **MAY SPACE, SYDNEY; NO MELBOURNE GALLERY**

