

**St. Petersburg Times**  
**Hues of the Emerald Isle**  
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TAMPA – "Verde, que te quiero verde," wrote the Spanish poet Federico Garcia Lorca, "Green, how I want you green." Josette Urso has rendered the painted equivalent of that lyrical utterance in a series on view at the Hillsborough Community College Ybor Art Gallery.

The paintings, all oil on board, are small – none measures more than about 6 or 7 inches in height or length. Their subject is the Irish countryside, which she painted plein air, or outside, as she viewed it. Technically they are landscapes, but the real story is one of color – greens layered upon greens, muted with grays and browns, contrasted with blues sometimes so dark they turn to black.

The paintings' size, the sketchy nature of their execution, and, most of all, their nostalgic quality – produce the effect of snapshots arranged to evoke memories of a trip.

They also invoke the memory of Claude Monet, the French Impressionist who painted the same subjects – water lilies, a bridge, a cathedral facade, haystacks – again and again to explore atmospheric lighting and colorations. Monet's paintings only look spontaneous; the artist would work on one for years to achieve its exquisite layering of color and brushstrokes.

Urso's work is not so calibrated; but it is charming and as fresh as the fields she paints after a rain, and lively with thick, brief impastos of red that simulate the carpet of sea creatures and plants clinging to boulders as the ocean swirls around them.

Gallery director Carolyn Kossar has arranged the works as color flows, so the eye moves from verdant hills, sometimes punctuated with the jaunty yellow of farmed land, to moody blues as the land gives way to sea and sky. The best are the most abstract; they distill those actual fields into fields of changing colors. *Field with Rain* and *Rainy Morning* manage to look really wet, with small arcs of paint looping across vertical planes of grass.

*Field Near the Sea* is tranquil and composed, the green plain stretching toward a thin horizontal line of deep blue sea that bisects the paler blues of shallows and sky, the paint applied in long, even strokes to simulate calm water. *Sea Cave* broods with mystery and claustrophobia. Small, dark openings beckon across a brief slice of sand, and the indeterminate gray-green cave walls swirl as if subtly alive.

Comparing them to Monet is probably unfair and burdens these modest works with technical expectations to which Urso, working quickly and intuitively, does not aspire. Her larger, more ambitious, paintings move away from such references, and viewers will have an opportunity to view a collection of them in January when the Leepa-Rattner Museum of Art in Tarpon Springs opens a joint exhibition of work by Urso and her husband, Peter Schroth.

This is a good warmup: a glimpse into a painter's methodology.