

# EMOTION IN THE ABSTRACT

## THE PAINTINGS OF PETER KUDLATA

**“I FIND INSPIRATION IN THE EMOTIONS OF ALL LIVING THINGS. I FEEL MY LANDSCAPE DESIGNS AND PAINTINGS ARE EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPES.”**

For Peter Kudlata, the correlation between nature and painting is not just reflected in the location of his studio in the wooded outskirts of Mequon, but also in the balance of his time. He is the founder, owner, and principle designer of Flagstone Landscaping now in its 43rd year of business. Naturally, Kudlata’s eye towards landscape design has seeped into his work with acrylic paint. Focus on nature and concepts of balance, texture, pattern, and lines are repeated with both palette knife and shovel.

Whether featuring nature or the smallest, seemingly insignificant thing, Kudlata often finds himself being continuously pulled toward painting in the abstract expressionist style. He is drawn to its promise of emotional and physical release during the act of painting: “The large canvas and large brushstrokes, the sounds and scratching, the entire event.” Kudlata further explains, “I’m not the most precise person when it comes to my art. Even my art studio is said to be organized chaos.”

Kudlata’s large works celebrate aesthetic, physical, and emotional qualities of abstract art. He is drawn to the fact that viewer interpretations of one artwork constantly changes over time. “Some people may call abstract art ‘pictures of nothing’, while I see abstract art as ‘pictures of everything’.” To create his “emotional landscapes,” Kudlata continuously builds layer upon layer of acrylic paint. In his search for the finished product, he often covers one painting with another until he can walk away or it “escapes the walls of [his] studio” in the vein of de Kooning.

Among the artists Kudlata admires, Mark Rothko, Joan Mitchell, and Cecily Brown are the most detectible. From Rothko, he is moved by the spiritual and calming qualities of his oeuvre, while Mitchell’s palette and focus on gardens are inspiring. From both Mitchell and Brown, Kudlata is attracted to their use of rhythmic patterns, dramatic brushstrokes, and gestural style.

Kudlata is an advocate of the local arts and is active in local art organizations such as the Milwaukee Art Museum and the MAM Contemporary Arts Society. The Cedarburg Art Museum is also grateful for his support.



*Kudlata in his studio  
Photo: Connor T. Martin*