

Express Woman



'PEPS' pupils graduate
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IN AWE. These art lovers admire these large pieces, above.

WARM: The earthy tones of "Unseed", at right.

PRETTY: "Evening Glade" and "Aztrec Rain", shown in inset at left.

—Photos: **SATEESH MAHARAJ**

Chic silk art

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CLARA APPLEWHITE MITCHELL'S silken works seemingly floated on the walls of Soft Box Studios, St Clair. As if on cue, they would gently sway and dance as interior art lovers approached them.

The artist was busy during the opening night of her exhibition *Nature Rhythms*, making new contacts and fielding questions from the public. She was, however, able to sit for a few moments and talk about her work.

"Ever since I was a child I was always interested in dabbling, with curly Q's and doodling. I've always had a knack for painting and drawing. Initially I wanted to be an interior designer. I steered towards textiles because that fascinated me more."

Mitchell studied at Howard University in Washington DC, USA, where she pursued a Bachelor of Fine Arts with a major in print making and a minor in textiles. From there she enrolled in the



PRACTICAL: "Autumn Stamps" decorative pillow.

Fashion Institute of Technology, New York, and studied for an Associates in Applied Science with a major in textile design. She worked in the fashion industry for three years before moving into home fashion where she designed rugs, wallpaper, linens. This, she ex-

plained was how she grew into what she was doing now.

"I was in the industry for about 15 years then I began a family, started consulting and decided in 2003 to give it a shot and just do my artwork. I started with the silk paintings."

Nature Rhythms is the artist's third exhibition in Trinidad.

She said that the Trinidadian was more sophisticated and enjoyed wall hangings, wall pieces and love the wearable art. Next year she hopes to do something else.

Mitchell said the medium used in this exhibition is called Gutta-Serti. It is East Indian in origin and what the artist compares to silk painting. She said she loves working on silk because it is easy to work with, durable, luminous and less dye is wasted.

"I do work on the other natural fibres, linens and cotton but with those it is a thicker fibre so they use more dye. Once you educate the client, they stay with the silk. The Gutta is a resist technique like batik. (The former) is more like school glue and runs out of a sty-

« Anything can spark my creative process. As an artist you grow and I started changing. »

lus. I draw with the Gutta, allow it to dry and the next day I can paint freely so the dye won't travel from one section to the next.

This is the first time Mitchell has done an exhibition in such a space. In her two previous showings, she says she would hang the pieces from branches.

"This is the first time I am doing this as a gallery piece and it looks totally different. You can see each piece clearly and it stands out as a single piece."

Of her inspiration when doing a piece she said: "I'm very much into

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ARTIST: Clara Applewhite Mitchell