

# ART REVIEW: A look at artist Ed Touchette's approach, at Trident Gallery

By Keith Powers / Correspondent

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The title of Ed Touchette's new show at Trident Gallery, "New Construction," may simply be taken from one of the paintings in the exhibition. "We went back and forth on that," says gallery director Matthew Swift. "His work is too interconnected to identify any discrete series." But it does say quite a bit about Touchette's approach.

If you go...

**WHAT:** Ed Touchette, "New Construction"

**WHERE:** Trident Gallery, 189 Main St., Gloucester

**WHEN:** through Sept. 17

**TICKETS:** Free. Visit [www.tridentgallery.com](http://www.tridentgallery.com) or call 978-491-7785.

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But it does say quite a bit about Touchette's approach.

"When you have a conversation with Ed, and he's got something he's seen that excites him, he won't stop," Swift says. "Another artist he's seen. Or a book he's read. Music. Or if I bring up something that he's familiar with. Architecture, music, literature — one of his distinguishing characteristics is finding cross-media inspirations."

Books. Music. Buildings. Cityscapes. All of it can go into Touchette's construction.

This exhibition, mostly new work with a few slightly earlier paintings that "seem to complement the others," Swift says, are almost all acrylic on canvas. Most are boldly joyful abstracts, with fanciful titles — "never ask an artist twice about a title," Swift says in explanation.

"Or Chicago," a large abstract that could easily be a skyline, is one example. The title came from polite but slightly off-the-mark questioning: "Is this Boston?"

"Yes, Boston," the artist replies. "Or Santa Fe. Or Chicago."

The title is a lark, but the inherent suggestion is apt. It could be any of those places, but what it truly represents is the notion of all those places. And the visual clues that suggest those places. And perhaps some ideas about those places. That's the new construction.

The show has bold, confident work. Shadings are omitted, with muscular lines and shapes standing clear on mostly solid backgrounds (the backgrounds themselves reveal textures and highlights on close examination).

There are inescapable architectures evoked, but this work is not simply abstract views of city skylines, or buildings. The architecture involved invokes community — the sense of place, as well as the people that live there. There are no figural representations (or few), but there is the real notion of the human activity that defines these "new constructions."

The show — Touchette's second individual exhibition at Trident, after 2015's "Lessons, Barns, and Other Structures" — will remain on view through Sept. 17. Like most exhibitions at the gallery, Swift treats them like museum shows, carefully curated, with conversations with the artist. Those presentations often veer sharply from the typical "this was my inspiration for that" monologues; so far, an opening reception is planned for Aug. 19, and a conversation with the artist scheduled for Aug. 27.

"Ed has never been afraid to take risks," Swift says. "Every three months or so he shows me something and says, 'Matt, I think I'm doing something crazy.' It's not always the finished product. But it usually represents a direction, whether it's realized in that painting or not."

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