Remembering Adele: A Retrospective
Carl Rattner, exhibit curator, is a retired STAC art professor. He was Adele’s friend and colleague for many years.
“Each day in my studio begins with a prayer. I pray as Thomas Merton did, for patience and the spiritual strength to avoid cowardly solutions, falsity and insincerity in my work. I embrace the concept of art as a gift that has the power to extend our minds and enrich our souls and counters the image of art as self-centered, obsessed with its own reflection.”

Sister Adele Myers OP was a Sparkill Dominican, widely respected as a teacher, arts advocate and curator. She was also a gifted designer and artist, whose work evolved into a unique style that won her ten one woman shows, inclusion into many group exhibits and eleven reviews by the N.Y. Times.

Sr. Ann Edward (Adele), 1966

*Untitled*, oil on canvas (26 x 27 in), 1960-61

*Untitled*, oil on canvas (32 x 23 in), 1960-61
The Villa Schifanoia Years

Her professional training began at Fordham University, where in 1956 she earned a BS in Education. She also studied at Notre Dame, and in 1961 earned a MA in painting at Villa Schifanoia, Italy.

Works from those early years, reflected her classic training in figure drawing, still life, landscape and portrait painting. Adele’s imagery then was essentially representational and often suggested her religious vocation. While these early works may have been student assignments, they were assured and skillfully executed.

One could speculate that Adele could have continued to paint as she did in the 1960’s, but her work changed markedly after a sabbatical leave, evolving into what we have come to recognize as her signature style.

These later works were beautifully designed and crafted. They were created by troweling cement onto rock-like styrofoam shapes that had been
reinforced with fiberglass. Sections were then painted with acrylic or fresco. They often featured combinations of controlled and random shapes, or contrasts of rough hewn texture and delicate color.

At the very least, these works are a feast for our eyes, but while we are often drawn to their striking visual qualities, we may begin to wonder about content and meaning.

Unlike earlier representational works - specific to the point of documenting time and place – Adele’s mature works are non-objective or abstract. In the latter instance, they reduce reality to basic forms that are only vaguely familiar. While titles help to suggest meaning, a deeper understanding often remains elusive.

Part of this challenge is the fact that contemporary, non-representational forms function on metaphorical levels. They are open to interpretation insofar as each of us brings our own

(clockwise)
Alleluia acrylic on cement and styrofoam (72 x 32 x 3 in), 2000
Untitled acrylic on cement and styrofoam (19 x 46 x 3 in)
Untitled acrylic on cement and styrofoam (13 x 10 x .75 in)
The Storm acrylic on cement and styrofoam (9 x 9 x 1 in)
knowledge, experience and feelings to a viewing. Another factor is the presence of chance elements which can further obscure meaning.

Adele understood that the creative process, like her religious vocation, was a spiritual journey involving chance and mystery with no guaranteed outcomes. Her vocation as a Dominican Nun is thus reflected in her work; both were journeys of faith.

This exhibit offers us an opportunity to discover relationships between artistic form and content, as well as the forces which drive artistic endeavor and growth. Adele’s work may also remind us of our own search for meaning, spiritual or otherwise; a search that combines what we already know and accept, with that which we have as yet to fully understand.

Carl Rattner, curator