

Realism, Magic Realism and Representational Art in Rancho Santa Fe

There are many facets to realistic painting styles - styles in which basically the image is recognizable, and the inspiration was found in reality. Realistic art can include paintings of familiar things but in unusual or unrealistic settings. In styles like Surrealism and Magic Realism, the images are recognizable but out of context, and are presented in combinations that are surprising and create deeper layers of meaning. In Realism, the artist is striving to convey not only an accurate depiction but also show a deeper reality of meaning. Representational artists do not intend any deeper meaning than what the objects themselves represent.

“An artist’s style on canvas is as unique to them as their handwriting”



Suzy Schaefer (www.suzyschaefer.com) is a Representational artist working in oil. What is unusual about her work is the size. Going against the mantra “bigger is better”, her pieces are beautiful miniatures. If you were to only see her work in print, you would be surprised to know her pieces are only 6” x 8” or 9” x 12”. “My feeling is that I can try a lot of experimenting at that size and throw it away if it turns out badly. And also, small painting means small price.”

Meeting Suzy you are charmed by her bright cheery nature, and her paintings reflect that personality, “I choose to paint in high chroma or vibrant color that expresses a sense of well being and light. Nothing gloomy.”

The subjects of Suzy’s paintings are very straightforward, “I have no hidden agenda in my artwork and am not making any political or environmental statements. What you see is what you get. The biggest statement I might make is trying to infuse some humor in the painting that will bring a smile to the viewer. The greatest thing about being an artist is the opportunity to convey my feelings about a subject on canvas. My greatest reward is when someone viewing my artwork feels the same way.”

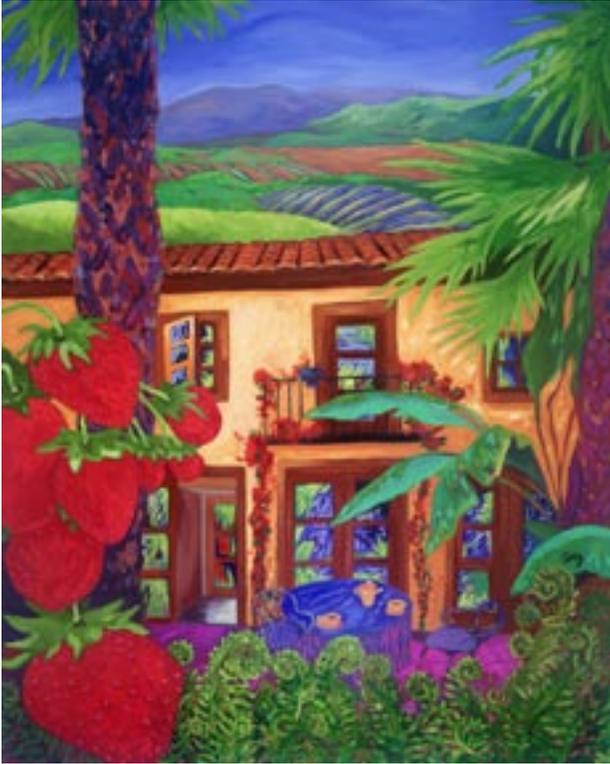
Suzy stays current with her education in the arts and regularly takes workshops and classes. “I’ve taken classes at various Art Schools in Scottsdale, Jeff Watts Atelier in Encinitas, and the California Art Club group. I’ve had different teachers come to my home studio to teach a class for four days with twelve artists.”

Some of the artists that have influenced Suzy’s style are Sargent, Zorn, Fechin, Sorolla, Repin, Gaspard, and Bongart. Inspiring living artists for Suzy are Carolyn Anderson - her mentor, Mian Situ, and Morgan Weistling. “I’ve tried to incorporate their sense of design, value, color, and brush strokes into my work. Although I am influenced by many artists, I believe that every artist’s style on canvas is as unique to them as their handwriting is on paper.”

Suzy works in her studio from sketches and photos. “I’m always taking photos, and with those and a quick pencil sketch I create a painting. I work in oil sometimes with an acrylic under painting. I use watercolors

only when I travel. I also paint from live models once a week at a studio at my home with eleven other artists. Working with a group on a regular basis keeps my skills sharp. Being part of the Rancho Santa Fe Art Guild has introduced me to many artists that I wouldn't have known any other way and has allowed me to display and sell my work to collectors all over the world."

"Color to create an environment of visual luxury"



Summer Sang in Me by Cathy Carey

I am more interested in primitive art or the Byzantine style than the Renaissance. I am also more interested in symbolic color, emotional content and shapes than realistic depictions of a scene. The Byzantine artists used color symbolically. White was the symbol of purity and black was the color of sin. They didn't use gray, because that would be the combination of good and evil and would not have made sense. Since many people at that time were illiterate they read the bible stories in the stained glass windows and paintings, and color was the vocabulary. In contrast, the Renaissance artists used gray as shading to depict more realistic space, which for me lost much of the emotional charge I feel from more primitive styles."

The first thing you notice about Cathy's paintings is the vivid color. "I use pure colors, and don't use black or gray to muddy my mixes, instead I tone my colors with their complements to keep the mixes fresh. Sometimes I place complements next to each other to create a color in the way the Impressionists did, allowing the eye to mix the color. I use color to depict emotional meaning rather than illustrate plain reality, using intense color to call attention to heightened emotional states. I think color has a healing property and can change your mood and create an environment of visual luxury. I don't know how people thrive in beige or gray environments. I would feel deprived. When I was able to choose a place to live as an adult I moved to California for the buttery light and palm trees, and was not disappointed. Although Virginia is a beautiful state, I was dismayed by the grey light and unrelenting green. California to me is a perfect dream of color and texture. From the muted range of desert colors in crystal clear light to the foggy air and coastal colors of the beach, it is an always changing glory of vision."

Cathy Carey (www.artstudiosandiego.com) works in a style she calls Magic Realism. "My images are not surreal, but they are not strictly real either, I paint images that suggest a heightened reality."

Some artists from which Cathy has drawn inspiration are Claude Monet, Henri Matisse, Henri Rousseau, and Wayne Thiebaud. "I was very fortunate to travel to Giverny to study Monet's style under an excellent teacher - Gayle Bennett. I was inspired by Monet's way of capturing sparkling light and underpainting in contrasting colors. I've always liked Matisse's method of using the canvas as a decorative surface breaking up space into patterns. Henri Rousseau is a favorite because of the sense of a story in his paintings, the mood and emotions he creates. I think this is because his style is primitive and allows for the magic of your emotions to engage, instead of the depiction being too realistic. I like Wayne Thiebaud's use of thick painterly color, and his brushstroke texture is a delight. It reminds me of cake frosting!"

Upon viewing Cathy's work, you wouldn't necessarily connect her style with any of these artists. "I can see their influence in aspects of my style. I am more interested in primitive art or the Byzantine style than the Renaissance. I am also more interested in symbolic color, emotional content and shapes than realistic depictions of a scene. The Byzantine artists used color symbolically. White was the symbol of purity and black was the color of sin. They didn't use gray, because that would be the combination of good and evil and would not have made sense. Since many people at that time were illiterate they read the bible stories in the stained glass windows and paintings, and color was the vocabulary. In contrast, the Renaissance artists used gray as shading to depict more realistic space, which for me lost much of the emotional charge I feel from more primitive styles."

There is a wide variety of subject matter in Cathy's work, scenes from California, Tuscany, Maui and Santa Fe. "I like to travel and take hundreds of photos - thank goodness for digital! I also paint on location, in watercolor if I am flying, in oil if I can pack it easily. In Giverny I painted outdoors every day with acrylic, and was pleased with the speed and ease of layering I was able to achieve. In my studio I use my photos, sketches and small paintings to create compositions for larger pieces. I work in oil on canvas using many layers. I underpaint in contrasting colors and finish with opposite colors and values. My paintings are not traditionally beautiful, they are a shade off normal, too heightened or flat to be real. This has been my experience of life, the things that caught my attention were overwhelming, they grabbed me and demanded attention. In my paintings I choose what calls to me - sometimes it's just a beautiful melancholy moon, or a perfect flower, or a startling texture. It seems important to me to glorify things like that, when so many tragic things grab the headlines."

When looking at a catalog of an artist's work, you notice the similarities that make up that person's style. The way they use color, what they choose to paint, and how they apply the paint all say something unique about each artist. "Painting is having a dialogue with your inner self, my personality is expressed through my art and sometimes I am surprised by what it says back to me. I notice that I rarely paint people, I paint solitary scenes or things closely observed in detail. I am not interested in literal reality, or grim scenes and colors. When I choose a scene it is the story behind it that interests me, the action about to take place or recently finished. It doesn't bother me to have unrealistic proportions or colors, as long as it occurs to me that it is compelling. I like the layering of color to represent sparkling light, it feels like the passage of time, a fleeting moment."

Cathy has had a formal education in painting starting with the Corcoran School of Art in Washington DC, the first Art Academy and Museum in the United States. "I also received a BFA in Painting from Virginia Commonwealth University in Richmond, VA. Over the years I have continued my education by taking workshops from favorite renowned artists. Several years ago I was invited to teach workshops every summer in Santa Fe, New Mexico." Cathy also holds private classes locally in her studio and travels several times a year to Los Angeles to teach.

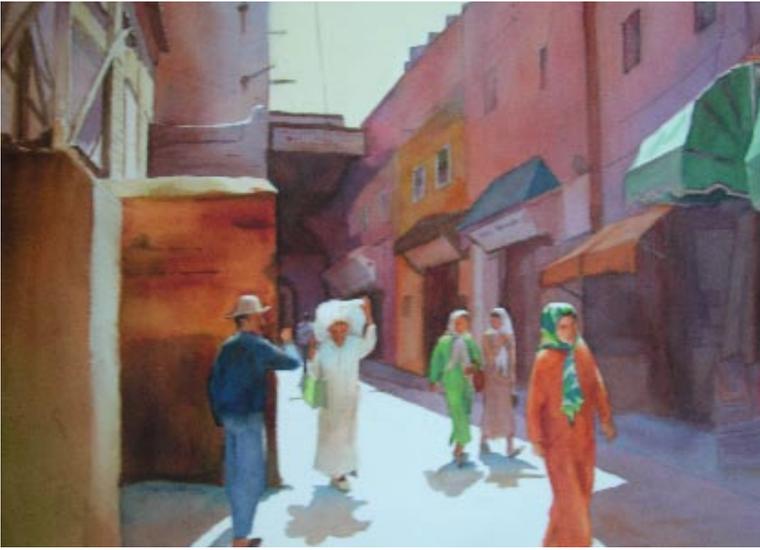
You can view Cathy's work at her gallery in the Offtrack Gallery building in Encinitas, and the Rancho Santa Fe Gallery. "I have enjoyed my connection with the Rancho Santa Fe Art Guild, my participation has brought me into contact with other artists and community events like the Rancho Santa Fe Art Fair. I am pleasantly surprised when recognized by name at the bank or grocery store, it is a good feeling to be part of a local gallery."

"Experiences and mysteries of life"

Pat Dispenziere (www.geocities.com/patart16/) is a watercolorist working in the style of Realism. "I have experimented but always come back to realism in my paintings because I love to draw and do my planning first."

Pat has been influenced by Richard Diebenkorn, Andrew Wyeth, Paul Gauguin, and Edgar Degas. "I love Diebenkorn's designs, the underlying abstract foundation and the mood of Wyeth's work, the color and figurative work of Gauguin, and the wonderful figures in Degas' paintings. There are many more artists I admire such as David Levine's figurative work."

Pat does not try to paint like these artists but learns from the qualities she admires in their work. "I love doing figurative work. I think the thing I hope to achieve from looking at the work of these master artists is their wonderful grasp of design."



On her journey of creativity Pat has tried a little bit of everything. “I started in watercolor as a plein air painter and I still do plein air work. The past 10 years I started doing larger studio paintings from my photographs especially ones I have taken when I’ve traveled. I also paint from live models every chance I get. I prefer clothed models to the nudes as I enjoy the color of clothing in my paintings.”

As part of her education Pat has taken numerous workshops and many teachers have been inspiring in her quest for knowledge. “Linda Doll has been a good influence, I attend her seminar group regularly. She presents us with many challenges

Homeward Bound by Pat Dispenziere which pushes me to do things that I probably would not have done. She makes me aware of all the things that I can correct in my work.” Like many artists, Pat’s interest in art started early. “I’ve been drawing since I was very small. I would draw on any scrap of paper I had. My mother loved art and encouraged me by sending me to children’s art classes. I majored in art in college receiving a Bachelor of Science in Art Education and a B.F.A. in Ceramic Art. I taught art in public schools after college for 3 years and at a later date was a substitute art teacher for 5 years.”

The subject matter in Pat’s work is varied, but the underlying theme is beauty. “I try to show the beauty of the world as I see it. So many people overlook this beauty and don’t enjoy it. Nature is wonderful and is everywhere to be seen. I also enjoy painting old things (buildings, people, etc) They reflect experiences and mysteries of life to us. I want to remind people to enjoy what they have here on earth, to learn to see the beauty that is all around them.”

In the past, painters were hired to paint a picture that reflected the taste and interests of their patron, who was the king, the pope or a wealthy merchant. Today it is said that all paintings are self portraits - reflecting the ideas and personality of the painter. Pat expresses her personality in her work in several ways. “I think my love of travel and seeing new places and meeting new people is expressed in my art. I tend to be a very organized, neat person and I think that is also expressed in my work. I am not a sloppy painter but plan everything out. I hated that about myself but have come to realize that is who I am and I just have to go with it. You can’t be someone you aren’t!”

In determining a subject to be painted, Pat looks for textures and shapes. “I think that is a holdover from the fact I majored in ceramic art in college. When I do a thumbnail sketch it consists of the planning of shapes on the page for the overall design. When I pick a subject to paint it usually has texture of some sort in it.”

Pat started painting in watercolor in 1968 and was hooked. She has made a name for herself through competitions and publications. “I enjoy competing in shows with my paintings. It gives me goals to work for. I’ve achieved signature memberships in three big watercolor societies and continue to work for more recognition for my paintings. I’ve been published in two national watercolor magazines and won awards in national competitions. Painting is such a joy and I feel so fortunate to have had the opportunities in my life to pursue my passion.”

View the artwork of these artists at the Rancho Santa Fe Art Guild Gallery located at: 6004 Paseo Delicias, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067 (858) 759-3545 www.ranchosantafeartguild.org