

Self Induced Inspiration -

Local artists who look inside for image and identity

by Cathy Carey

In art, it's all been done before, or so they tell you. Instead of having this crush their creative independent spirits, the three artists profiled here look within to express their unique interpretations of contemporary life, and definitely breathe new life into painting.

“My style is always evolving and changing while staying the same. I paint from my gut & spirit”



California Dreaming by Barbara Millé

Artist Barbara Millé (www.studiomille.com) was self taught for the first half of her life. In the second half, she decided to find out how artists survive in our current world and earned a BA in Visual Arts - UCSD Magna Cum Laude. “My mentor was internationally known artist Italo Scanga. He was my professor at UCSD in La Jolla. He was my friend and helped me to expand my horizons in my art life.”

Drawing on inspirations as diverse as Da Vinci and Andrew Wyatt, Kenneth Nolan, Salvador Dali and Judy Chicago, Barbara maintains that her art work “really relates to me and where I am in my life path”. What I like about these artists is they dared to be different in their own way.”

Barbara has a universal approach to art, which does not rely on preconceived ideas about style. “I do what I do because it is the way I do it. I was told by my first oil painting teacher in college that I was a colorist. I know I am not afraid of using color. I love starting with a blank paper and a brush with no idea what the finished painting will look like. The element of surprise in the finished painting gives me great joy. I think that is why customers say my paintings give them the feeling of happiness.”

Working in all mediums, but currently painting in watercolors as well as making hand crafted jewelry, Barbara hopes that people like and enjoy her work, but she paints to satisfy herself and believes in “Art for Art’s Sake”. In describing her choice of materials Barbara says, “I paint in watercolor because I found it to be the least toxic of all the painting materials. I do use other materials if the art piece requires it. I am not against using found objects and incorporating them into my work.”

One of the subjects that Barbara has explored in her paintings is her home town of Encinitas. She hopes to preserve in paint the life style that is quickly disappearing with rapid growth. Working from her imagination and her own photos in her home studio, Barbara’s paintings are about “how I am feeling at the time when I am painting since those feeling always come through the paint. Most people say my paintings have a happy feeling to them. I have studio space but prefer to work on the kitchen table best since that is where I have worked most of my life.”

As a member of the Rancho Santa Fe Art Guild, Barbara’s work can be seen regularly at the Gallery run by the cooperative of artists based around Rancho Santa Fe. “I find the Guild to be a friendly group with serious think-



ing artists.”

“...in a sense it’s almost a diary.”

Representational artist Jan Bayer (beingjb@yahoo.com) quotes Matisse in describing her paintings, “I think art should be like an easy chair”. Much of Jan’s work depicts where she’s been and what she’s done, a diary of her love of travel all over the world including Japan, Hawaii, and Italy. While painting on location in exotic locales, Jan says, “I try to express my love of color and light in my paintings.”

When asked about the roots of her style and technique, Jan notes inspiration from many artists for different reasons - John Singer Sargent for his paintings done from travels, Sorolla for his love of painting water, Janet Fish for her close up focus on objects and vibrant colors and Wayne Thiebauld for his rich use of color.

Georgia on my Mind by Jan Bayer

As with the other artists profiled here, her art is unique from the styles that have inspired her. “I prefer to call my work representational rather than realism. I usually focus very close up on part of a subject or scene so that it seems to pop forward of the picture frame. I usually include a visual joke or something whimsical in my work. My subjects cover still life, landscape, and figures.”

Jan works traditionally, using oil on linen, and occasionally on board. When working from photos in the studio, she builds up layers, refining the image with each layer. When working outdoors she works alla prima (wet into wet) and then finishes up details in the studio.

“I lived and studied in Florence where I learned Sight-Size drawing and painting. It’s an amazing tool, especially for still life. Sometimes I still use this procedure when working from a still life in the studio.”



Being Koi by Julia C. R. Gray

From the time Jan was a child growing up in Washington, DC her Dad often took her to The National Gallery of Art and numerous other museums where she was exposed to endless styles of the masters, traditional and contemporary. “From elementary school age and up I have studied drawing, charcoal, pastels, and oil.” As an adult Jan continued her education at the Philadelphia College of Art, Cecil-Graves Studio in Florence, Italy and with Diane Tesler in Virginia. “Diane Tesler was my primary painting teacher in Virginia who I discovered long after leaving the Philadelphia College of Art. She taught me everything I know about color and painting. I saw her work, admired it, and by a miracle, it turned out that she taught nearby.”

As a final question I asked Jan what she hoped people saw in her work and she replied, “I want to bring joy, delight, the wonder of light and color, and often a laugh. I want to share my view of the beauty of the world around us and the love that goes into a creation.”

“Nature is the perfect expression of the Sacred”

When talking to Julia C. R. Gray (www.jgrayartist.com) about her art, you are immediately charmed by her integrity and delight in her unique visions. Her work is representational and surreal. Technically, you can see the effort and forethought that goes into the balance of composition and the depth of layered intense colors that are grounded with earth tones. There is a rhythm to the brush strokes that expresses joy. The message that comes through in Julia’s work is the expression of her true self whether it is emotion, visions or her connection with the Sacred.

Her current series, *The Koi and Garden Goddesses*, was inspired from a series of dreams. Before painting, Julia often meditates so as to open herself to the flow of Spirit. “My visionary work reflects my view of the sacred and my connection to spirit and nature. I believe the Sacred is within us, and a part of all that is around us. My earlier work of dancing pregnant goddesses was a reflection of my own process of birthing my authentic self, and the joy of healing. The realistic images of nature that I paint are often chosen because they are endangered. I want to share the beauty and magic of creatures that are disappearing all over the world. My hope is to raise awareness of the plight of these creatures and to inspire others to think about what is happening to our planet.”

In describing her way of working Julia says, “I take the inspired image and create a composition in my sketch book. I prefer to work with photos I have taken of flowers or plants (or water or koi) and also real frog patterns on the bodies of the dancers. Next, I sketch a minimal composition on the canvas and wash in basic blocks of color using turpentine and oils. I mix my colors on the palette before I start. I love working with brilliant color (Schminke and Old Holland have beautiful pure yellows, reds and greens). I also bring in toned colors to create an earthy warm feeling in the work. Using smaller brushes I lay in the midtones, starting from the background working toward the foreground. With a second dry brush I blend the strokes. I work with Liquin to create multiple transparent layers - usually a minimum of five layers, and as many as 8 layers. The shadows are added during the 3rd or 4th layers. The last touches are highlights and stronger brush strokes which add to the rhythm of the work.”

Julia began studying oil painting at 13, and was painting murals by age 16. She has studied and worked in many art forms but claims oil painting as her first love. Julia acknowledges the Elementary and High School teachers who allowed her to express herself through painting as the ones who affected her most. “My kindergarten teacher recognized how hard I worked on sunflowers, painting each seed. My Junior High History teacher allowed me to paint a historical mural on the classroom wall. Many teachers would give me extra credit for adding a painting or illustration to a report or story. Their positive support of my art work gave me a foundation of confidence in creating art.” As an adult Julia believes in giving back to the community the support she felt at an early age. “I had a goal to work with a professional group of artists who are interested in furthering art through community projects. It was a perfect fit for me. I believe the programs the Rancho Santa Fe Art Guild has for working with children and philanthropic work will bring positive experiences to our community, and as a professional artist that is very important to me.”



“when I look at my painting it makes me happy”

Pat Macri is a self taught artist who describes her style as an Impressionist colorist. “I also do abstract when the mood takes me, but I just love color.”

The Bravest Angel by Pat Macri

Pat lists as influential artists, (first names) Sargent, Fetchin, Bonegarde and living artists Steven Quiller and Dan McCaw. "I love the color and the subject matter of these artists." A teacher who guided her creativity was Jim Morrell. "He always told me to search for that creative part inside me. It was with his positive encouragement that I ventured into art. Another guiding force was Jeff Watts, his love for Art and his willingness to teach lit the flame that burns in me today."

Although Pat has been inspired by other artists as a part of her process in creating art, the influence that most drives her work is not from outside sources, "I am truly inspired from within when I start a painting. In choosing my subject matter I look for shapes and values that are intriguing, and exciting color. What influences me the most is when I look at my painting and it makes me happy. I don't want to paint like anyone else - just me."

Viewing Pat's work brings a smile, "I hope people enjoy my animals, that it touches their heart and soul, and it speaks to them. I want to express peace, hope and tenderness through my artwork. I express my feelings through my art by my use of color and emotion."

Pat has been a member of the Rancho Santa Fe Art Guild since 1997. "Being part of this group has helped me to grow and meet artist friends. I paint everyday and regularly paint with a small group from the guild. Last summer I taught a beginner's class at my home and I learned from that too. We learn a little from everyone we meet."

To view the work of Barbara Millé, Jan Bayer, Julia C. R. Gray and Pat Macri visit the Rancho Santa Fe Art Guild Gallery located at: 6004 Paseo Delicias, Rancho Santa Fe, CA 92067 (858) 759-3545 www.ranchosantafeartguild.org

The member artists also display next door at the Wells Fargo Bank.

