

in the garden|**design**

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VIBRANT PALETTE



ARTIST CATHY  
CAREY'S  
WORLD  
SWIRLS WITH  
COLOR





PREVIOUS PAGES left to right: Plein air painting by Cathy Carey done in French Impressionist Claude Monet's garden in Giverny. CAREY holds art classes in her glasshouse studio, which is surrounded by scented geraniums, California poppies, purple sage and pride of Madeira. Potted plants include a jade shrub, various Echevaria and dusty miller.



ABOVE: Portrait of Ginger. RIGHT: The artist with Zuni and Sazi. OPPOSITE: Blue Agave Americana is complemented by several combinations of Echevaria, Euphorbia tirucalli 'Sticks on Fire,' baby necklace vine, kalanchoe chandelier plant, Crassula falcata, Aeonium 'Sunburst' and Aloe variegata.



As a student at the Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, D.C. in the late '70s, Cathy Carey set an ambitious goal: To obtain an education and career that would, in 20 years, enable her to pursue fine art full time.

Her acute awareness of aesthetics inspired Carey to include California in her plan.

"The suburb in Virginia where I grew up was like a loud noise, visually," she recalls. "I dreamt of undulating hills, and terrain that wasn't all the same."

After earning a degree in fine arts from Virginia Commonwealth University, she came to San Diego, found work as a graphic artist, and during a real estate downturn, bought a condo in La Costa. As art director of the *Coast Dispatch* newspaper in Encinitas, "I worked like a fiend," Carey recalls. "Twelve-hour days." She illustrated articles, did ad campaigns and even designed a parade float.

When she was laid off in 1990, she bravely bought a computer. "It cost \$3,000. I charged it on my credit card."

Carey couldn't have picked a better time to become a freelance graphic designer specializing in desktop publishing.



"Jobs poured in. I worked around the clock, putting magazines together, and doing logos, illustrations, and projects for clients such as Costco. I paid off that \$3,000 in three months."

She met and married Brian Sinofsky, an engineer with Kodak, moved into his home in Scripps Ranch, and continued a daunting workload that included 30-plus art students in addition to graphic design clients. Just before her target 20 years was up, her father died. "I received \$5,000 cash as a legacy, so I took a week off — the first in years — and went to Giverny, France, to Monet's garden." There she studied Impressionism with other art-

ists and experienced "an environment created to paint in, and a garden as a work of art."

So, when she returned to San Diego, she decided to create just that.

## GLASS HOUSE

As Carey ascends a flight of stone stairs that lead from her home to her hilltop studio and garden above Lake Hodges, two golden retrievers trot at her heels. Through an archway, gravel pathways lead past beds of drought-tolerant perennials. These include pinwheel daisies, lavender, ice plants, agaves, scented geraniums, coral trees and pride of Madeira — all arranged

with an eye to texture and color.

In one area, blue *Agave americana* serves as a backdrop for the orange stems of *Euphorbia tirucalli* 'Sticks on Fire.' Beneath the succulents flows a stream of cobalt-blue tumbled glass. Nearby, flanking a putting green, grow bold red geraniums.

Past a shady grape arbor/sitting area, an eight-sided structure suggests a faceted gemstone. Its walls and peaked roof consist of wood-framed windows, and its position takes advantage of a panoramic view.

"We put two sunrooms together — the kind you add onto your house," Carey says of the 14-foot-diameter structure.

CAREY paints in Monet's garden in Giverny (right) and works on a pastel in her North County painting studio (below).

She works primarily in an upstairs studio in her home, and uses the garden studio as a venue for classes. It also serves as a destination for clients and visitors. In the spring of '06, it was on a tour of North County artists' gardens sponsored by the San Dieguito Art Guild.

As she explains how she composes landscape paintings, Carey, who authored a book on color theory, gestures to various aspects of her garden.



#### MEET THE ARTIST, SEE HER WORK

Escondido artist Cathy Carey hosts several art events a year at her home north of Lake Hodges. Visitors are welcome to enjoy her garden, tour her glass-sided studio, and view her latest works. To be included on Carey's mailing list or to make an appointment, contact her at 760/489-9109 or [element@abac.com](mailto:element@abac.com).

"Colors that are closest to you are the most brilliant. You also see more value changes in the foreground." ("Value" refers to lights and darks.) "As you look farther away, colors are more neutral. When I paint the middle distance, I mix foreground colors with their complements."

To give her painted landscapes greater depth, Carey uses the technique of atmospheric perspective to make objects smaller and less detailed. "Distant mountains are pale compared to those that are closer, and eventually become misty and indistinct."

Her own paintings of homes surrounded by gardens and cultivated fields typically show a vivid flower in the foreground. The viewer looks past this to the painting's focal point, the structure, then beyond to overlapping hills. The eye moves through the composition via pathways, undulating lines of foliage and rivers of color.

#### MELANCHOLY JOY

Carey has achieved her goal; she now spends the majority of her time painting, and exhibits her work at local galleries, including the Cathy

Carey Gallery in Encinitas. Whether her medium is oil, pastel or watercolor — or Photoshop software (which she mastered as a graphic designer) — she is known for bold and unexpected uses of color.

For a painting to make sense, "the temperature of the color has to fit the warmth or coolness of the setting, time of day and season," she says. This requires an awareness of subtle variations; for example, lemon yellow suits summer and "squash yellow" (which is more orange) fits fall. "Lemon yellow is the warmest color, so anything added to it makes it cooler," she notes.

Any locale has a personality expressed by distinctive hues, she says, so an artist should use these to capture its ambience. When she did a series on

Mission Trails, she used word associations to help her remember colors and images — such as “ginger dust,” and “root beer manzanita.” One of her favorite destinations, Maui, brings to mind the word “aquamarine.” As for colors distinctive to our area, “California green has some red in it — it’s more of an olive green — and is nothing like the emerald green of Ireland.”

Carey uses color intuitively, as well.

“Color speaks of an artist’s inner world and transmits his or her feelings to the viewer,” she says. “I pick pure colors, in order to not muddy the emotions they convey.” A theme found in much of her work is joy mixed with poignancy.

“If you could never return to Hawaii, how would you describe it, so you would remember it? I paint moments worth remembering, with an awareness that they may never come again. Such epiphanies have a melancholy beauty.”

Her own past has deepened her sensibilities. At age 10, Carey was in a serious car accident that lacerated and crushed the right side of her face. This led to six years of plastic surgeries. She admits to a fascination with the beauty and viciousness of glass, and with mosaics that use bits of glass to make a pleasing whole.

“Those things you focus on and choose to do as an artist say what you’re all about,” she says. “Art is an introspective process, a dialog with your shadow self.”

Carey says many of her paintings depict houses because they are sanctuaries — places of refuge. “Having a home means you can shut a door and have a level of security and self-sufficiency.” She pauses to gaze at the silver curve of Lake Hodges and the cloth-like folds of the surrounding valley. “I depict paths that lead into the hills beyond houses, because life is a journey. When I look out the windows of my studio, that’s what I see.” ■

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Cathy Carey’s work is on exhibit at: Cathy Carey Gallery, Encinitas, 760/489-9109; Rancho Santa Fe Art Gallery, 858/759-3545;

Website: [www.artstudiosandiego.com](http://www.artstudiosandiego.com)

Cathy Carey Annual Studio and Garden tour: 10-4 Nov 3 and 4, 2048 Ridgecrest Place Escondido (Directions: from Del Dios turn right on Via Rancho Parkway turn left Eucalyptus, left on Hamilton, left on Ridgecrest Pl. go to end to 2048 From 15 North or South take Via Rancho Parkway exit West, Right on Eucalyptus, left on Hamilton, left on Ridgecrest go to end to 2048)