

Surf and Mountain Range

Interview with Monica Linville – Painter of the issue

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You have placed your artworks into three categories: Abstracts, Magical Realism and Contemporary Realism. Are borders between these categories strict?

To be perfectly honest, labeling my styles is done strictly for “commercial” reasons. First of all, if I want people to find my website on the internet, I need to use key words that people might use when searching for art. Truth be told, I would rather not use labels at all, especially since I use so many different techniques to serve the purpose of each individual painting. In person, when someone asks me what style I work in or what kind of painter I am, I’m often at a loss for words.

I use whatever style I think best fits the subject I am focusing on at the time. That changes from painting to painting. Aside from the practical purposes of categorizing, I’ve also found that people seem to *need* to be told what they’re looking at, or what they will find when they click on a button or open a portfolio. When trying to entice gallery owners, for example, to look at my work, if it doesn’t say the right thing on the cover, the portfolio isn’t even opened. Over the centuries styles, techniques and movements have been labeled, not just by gallery owners, museum curators and critics but by the artists themselves!!! Why is it so important? Perhaps if artists spent more time painting and less time trying to define themselves the work would be more pure? But reality is this. Labels have been created, the public has been told what has value and what hasn’t, the starving artists have tried to meet those demands in order to gain access to the showrooms of the world and put bread on their tables and the creative process suffers. Ahem. Sorry. Perhaps I rant.



Has anyone of old masters of painting influenced you?

Rembrandt and Caravaggio. My goal, with my paintings, is to create connections between myself and the painting and between the painting and the viewer. I want to create a refuge for the mind to wander in at will, away from the craziness that is everyday life. I want to strike a chord with the viewer and to elicit an emotional response. I believe it's the use of light that makes that happen and I learned this by gazing at these two great masters' works. I may work in a number of different styles, but in each case I choose to work low key, with dramatic contrast between light and dark. This is their influence. Oh, and the animators at Disney Studios.

Abstract forms often reminds figures to the viewer (accordingly to Gestalt conception). Is it a problem for ambitious abstractionist? Does this tendency bother you?

This doesn't bother me in the least. I truly believe that once I finish a piece, it's no longer mine. It belongs to the universe. No matter what my intentions are with a painting, abstract or realistic, once finished any interpretation is entirely subjective. Because I work abstractly, realistically and somewhere in between, people tend to look for hidden things in paintings where none consciously exist. Their discoveries delight me. Sometimes they find things that I had no intention of putting in the painting but when seen through their eyes, I realize are there and, most importantly, are true. That can be an enlightening experience for me, as I believe that the truth of the artist always surfaces in a work of art. Other times I never see what they see, but find great satisfaction in knowing the work struck a chord with them because they are engaged in *seeing* the work.

How much are your paintings filled with real world and to which level contains it phantasies?

This is not an easy question to answer, believe it or not. The imagery I use, the colors, the light and the textures are all informed by what surrounds me in the real world. But I paint from my gut, not from my eyes. Even when painting in a realistic style, my color palette is not based on what I'm looking at but on what I'm feeling when I see. When I paint abstractly, the textures and colors I use are not selected consciously, but yet, when seeing my environment you cannot help but notice the connection between my real world and what ends up on the canvas. Sooooo.... I guess my work is suspended somewhere between the two worlds?

Are your art a way of communicating with people? If yes – does it refers also to you abstract works?

It very definitely is. I think that is true of all art though, whether the artists admit to it or not. If we are not trying to communicate something, why do we (in this

case, painters) put our work up on walls for people to see rather than burn it when finished? While sometimes I do indeed have specific messages in my paintings, in *all* cases I am attempting to make a connection between myself and the viewer. I intend to embrace you. I intend to establish an intimate relationship with you. I intend to communicate that everything and everyone is connected in some manner. This applies to every painting I do, realistic or abstract.

If you were to add some colours to the world, which one would you use?

I would use color combinations, rather than specific colors and no doubt they would be analogous. Each individual color that sets next to another on the color wheel, in progression, is a delight on its own but when placed next to the color on either side of it serves to enhance and be enhanced by that that surrounds it. True for color; true for the world.

In your opinion: is it really possible to divide people into two groups: artists and non-artists?

I suppose it's possible but I simply don't think it's necessary. My wish is that *all* of us think creatively because, god knows, at this point in our existence we need all the creative thinking we can get. "*The old don't work no more*"- Monica Linville.

You live in such special place in world; this fact certainly has an impact on your paintings. Is it conscious impact – or rather unconscious and uncontrolled?

I have been painting my whole life, (which is a lot of years!) and if I had to try and guess, %75 of that time was spent painting realistically. As a result, my brain is filled with imagery from my environment. Now, when painting abstractly, when I wish to introduce texture, color or light, I naturally gravitate to very organic forms. I laugh because in my mind, my work is universal, not regional, because that's how I see it. However, apparently it's not how others see it!!! I recently had someone tell me that my work "*screams tropical*". I smiled but in my head I was asking "how can that be?" I recently did a retrospective exhibition of my work going back over 50 years. It was interesting to see what characteristics of style I started with as a child in the northern United States that are still with me today. They are intense color, high contrast and texture. I ask you.... is that tropical???

(laughing)

Monica Linville's website: <http://www.monicalinville.com/>

Picture source: Monica Linville's archives.