

## Why Women Paint

By Carla Caletti

Like in a lucid dream, when you know you can change the course of things, so it is with painting; creating a world on the canvas that is one's own. For the six women artists, Gretchen Butler, Carla Caletti, Marylu Downing, Pauline Levy Lazzarini, Maria-Esther Sund and Noel Yates featured in a summer show at Quercia Gallery in Duncans Mills, painting gives rise to a personal narrative.

The narrative told on the canvas can be anything an artist wants it to be. That is in part why we paint. Paintings can be a world based on a moment in time, a memory; some inspiration that may germinate and then one day makes itself known. Paintings can be something we see in nature that sparks our creativity or something from our daily life. They can be about a transition; a passing of a life or a beginning of a new day, or an imaginary world. These personal narratives might be fantastical, magical, lovely, layered, quirky, symbolic, funny, curious or sometimes, mysterious. The freedom to articulate anything in our work is part of the fun in creativity.

Speaking to the conjuring of things in painting, Pauline Levy Lazzarini says, "This winter I went to see a wonderful guitarist, Tommy Emanuel, play in San Francisco and I came home so inspired that I decided to paint women playing string instruments. I personally do not play any instrument, but my husband and children all play string instruments. Some of the instruments in my paintings I invented."

For Noel Yates, painting has been documenting "the lives of a family of three brilliant and friendly aliens from the planet Zog. She first met The Greens: Eileen, Gregory and their child, Zephyr during a visit to the Grand Canyon in 1983".

The impetus for paintings can be many things; color, form, history, time, nature, stories, events and sometimes, the source is unknown while painting. The meaning may come to us during our work. The work of painting is layered. Sometimes the work may come forth with relative ease. Other times, it is a process of adding and removing; transforming stories old into new.

Marylu Downing says her recent work is about, "Metamorphosis; stepping on and over that line with transformation as my personal theme; with nature showing the way home."

And, for Gretchen Butler, her new series of paintings called *Time Line* include "images of stary skies, ravens, ancestors and allusions to ancient cultures."

A painting can become a mirror of things both conscious and unconscious for an artist. We can see ourselves on the canvas, perhaps not always in a clear and direct way. Sometimes we change as we paint and so too does our work. We can invent a new language anytime on the canvas that speaks to what is most true.

The viewer of paintings can interpret their own meaning to the work. They may see themselves in a painting or a symbol may resonate. A painting may inspire, provoke, amuse or resonate in any number of ways. Viewing a painting is perhaps as individual as creating

one. Having our work seen is part of the painting process. It is a dialogue we start with the viewer long before we meet them.

Maria Esther-Sund says of her work, “With my collage and mixed media paintings I have the opportunity to articulate my journey with simple objects that convey symbolism. I provide a mysterious and intriguing surface to engage the viewer, allowing them to connect with the artwork and invent their own story and take their own route.”

The process of painting can be familiar and unknown, with figures, symbols and colors speaking of narratives without time, those realms like dreams that are always with us, but not always seen. We paint to find the stories that live inside of us. Painting is an attempt to create a language on the canvas that gives a voice to our own ever-changing narratives.

To see the artist’s work, visit the exhibition, “On the Line; Six Women Narrative Artists” at Quercia Gallery in Duncans Mills, July 5- August 29, 2011 with an opening reception on Saturday July 9, 4-7 pm. The show will feature paintings and a unique hand-made doll by each of the artists.

Contact the Gallery at:

[QuerciaGallery@aim.com](mailto:QuerciaGallery@aim.com)

<http://www.quercia-gallery.com>

707.865.0243

Hours 11-5, Closed Tuesdays & Wednesdays