



COLLECTOR'S FOCUS WOMEN ARTISTS

DYNAMIC STRENGTHS

INTRODUCTION BY JOHN C. BERN



1. Courthouse Gallery Fine Art, *Star Roots*, acrylic on linen, 12 x 12", by Janice Anthony. 2. Bryony Bensly, *Gaia's Birds*, oil on canvas, 30 x 40"

March marks the beginning of mud season in Maine. The winter snows are melting and the spring equinox brings the hope of a new growing season.

Janice Anthony lives on a farm long ago carved out of the wilderness. She and her family often seek out the wilderness where scenes such as in her painting *Star Roots* attest to a flourishing, complex ecosystem. She says, "I live happily in the midst of nature, here in Maine where I tend to trust in the general benevolence of the natural world around me. Maybe I have come to expect a benign disinterest, though I know I have no real control over the streams and forests around me, we have colonized this place to suit our lives.

"But I am always aware of what exists beyond, distant from the assumed safety of this outcropping of nature; true wilderness that fascinates and calls me. There are vast spaces that remain indifferent to me, to all of us, where I would get lost, or feel danger, or be overwhelmed by immensity. Knowing such wild places exist is necessary to me, that there are cold relentless winds that scour unknown lands with a force I could not withstand, where any tiny narrative I might presume to impose is completely irrelevant. Though I have only touched small corners

of these spaces, and know I could not survive long in their inhospitable reaches, they exist in my mind and I feel them as my home."

Far from the wild places, **Maria Jimenez** paints the beach at *East Hampton*, an exclusive resort on Long Island. It is reminiscent of 19th-century luminist nocturnes with its soft, atmospheric lighting. Known for her insightful portraits of adolescents discovering themselves and their place in the world, this painting also portrays a time of transition—transition in the moment and transition over time. The footprints of people now moved on to the next part of their day will soon be erased by the rising tide. Rising sea levels and ocean storms will eventually erase all the human encroachments on the environment.

Adina Yoon uses the environment and the mythical phoenix to illustrate a personal transition out of "mental roadblocks" in her work. She says, "Like the white phoenix rising from the ashes of old situations that weren't working, this painting represents the rekindling of that initial spark and joy, and represented by the volcanoes, even the underlying tumultuous passion and fury that explode into the creation of something new and something quite unexpected...This painting explores that inner journey of the artist,

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that most times in order to create something new or to follow an illuminated revelation, you must cut ties and even destroy the old world that you knew. There is no creation without destruction, there is no destruction without initial creation. This piece explores that paradox and that dance of life and death of the creative process and the continual evolution of the artist herself.”

Bryony Bensly depicts the mythological Gaia, the Greek mother of all life, emerging from the fecund earth. Today, the goddess has given her name to the Gaia hypothesis which posits the earth as a complex system held in balance to sustain life. Bensly says, “*Gaia’s Birds* addresses the rapidly declining bird population and asks what this world would be without them? Here,

3. **Era Contemporary**, *Illumination*, oil on panel, 12 x 9”, by Adina Yoon.

4. **Abend Gallery**, *East Hampton*, watercolor, 7½ x 10”, by Maria Jimenez. 5. **33 Contemporary**, *Eride / Rebirth*, oil on Belgian linen, 39.3 x 39.3”, by Erica Calardo.

6. **33 Contemporary**, *Braids and Gloves Too*, oil on panel, 24 x 18”, by Ellen Starr Lyon.

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they are fading away, their fragility expressed as glass, as the day wanes. Gaia and the bird's stillness attempts to create a sense of silence where life should be thriving."

The sheer variety of artwork represented throughout the pages of this collector's focus highlight the creativity and innovation of women artists working today. As you move through the section, contemplate which works speak loudest to you.

Blue Rain Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico, represents an array of talented artists working today. Among these is figurative painter **Robin Jones**, whose paintings reflect realistic portraits of young people coupled with endangered animals and sometimes historical figures. Young people, Jones feels "will inherit the planet that we leave them—and they are also among the strongest and most influential voices in the climate change and animal liberation movements." She

paints on aluminum rather than canvas, and often incorporates gold leaf into the overall composition. "I love using metal leaf in my paintings for multiple reasons. These metals are of the earth, they are considered 'precious,' and therefore I feel they give a reverential quality to the subject matter (similar to the *Madonna and Child* paintings of the Gothic/Proto-Renaissance)," says Jones. "I also love, aesthetically, the way the light reflects off of the metal, changing as the light in the space shifts."

Cristy Dunn's artwork has always been deeply connected to place. "I hope a reverence for the land and the natural world comes through. There was a time when I felt limited as a woman artist from the Appalachian region, but I have come to appreciate and embrace these experiences," she says. "More than anything, my work is informed by the beauty and the hardness of the landscape and by the rich

culture and music that surround me. If nothing else, my work is authentic." Dunn feels that the internet has opened doors for women artists, rural artists and artists from all kinds of backgrounds. "When you buy a work of art, you're acquiring a little piece of the artist's heart and soul," she says, "and you're making it possible for that artist to keep creating more work."

Colored pencil artist **Suzanne Vigil**, who is based in New Mexico, uses her medium to create brilliant color and texture. "Those qualities are so important in my narratives. As a figurative artist I am drawn to all shapes, sizes and colors and with each new character, there is a story to be told. I begin with a focal point which could be the figure or a unique prop. The story and the figure begin to unfold simultaneously," she says. "I work the entire surface from one component to the next. This helps me balance color and depth. I look for areas where texture



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7. **33 Contemporary**, *Scorpion Whisperer*, oil on dibond, 18 x 24", by Kate Van Doren. 8. **Blue Rain Gallery**, *That You're Part of This Place*, oil and 24k gold leaf on aluminum panel, 36 x 48", by Robin Jones. 9. **Suzanne Vigil**, *Can Fantasy Be Real?*, colored pencil on drafting film, 32 x 28" 10. **Blue Rain Gallery**, *Going Back From Whence We Came*, oil and 24k gold leaf on aluminum panel, 36 x 48", by Robin Jones. 11. **Mary Calengor**, *PERSEVERANCE*, oil on canvas, 36 x 48" 12. **Pamela Winters**, *CHILLI*, bronze, 20 x 9 x 10" (left) and *CHARLIE*, bronze, 25½ x 9 x 10" 13. **Linda Mann**, *Sandstone, Driftwood, and Bottle*, oil on linen, 15½ x 23¼" 14. **Blue Rain Gallery**, *Ready to Imagine Another World. And Ready to Fight For It*, oil and 24k gold leaf on aluminum panel, 30 x 24", by Robin Jones. 15. **Suzanne Vigil**, *Carnival Queen*, colored pencil on drafting film both sides, 32 x 28" 16. **Linda Mann**, *Wrinkled Paper, Greek Vase, and Obsidian*, oil on linen, 18¾ x 28¼"

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17. **Cristy Dunn**, *Finding Freedom*, oil on panel, 24 x 18" 18. **Mary Calengor**, *IMPERFECT BEAUTY*, oil on canvas, 48 x 48" 19. **Crystal Beshara**, *Summer Canopy*, oil on Belgian linen, 16 x 14" (framed) 20. **Crystal Beshara**, *Moon Flower*, watercolor on 140lb cold-pressed paper, 12 x 12" 21. **Tara Will**, *Gold Rush*, soft pastel, 25½ x 19½" 22. **Suzie Seerey-Lester**, *Wood Stork Study*, acrylic on panel, 12 x 6" 23. **Tara Will**, *Zion Energy*, soft pastel, 25½ x 19½" 24. **Suzie Seerey-Lester**, *Walking the Rails*, acrylic on panel, 36 x 26" 25. **Tara Will**, *Battery Park Palms*, soft pastel, 31½ x 23½" 26. **Suzie Seerey-Lester**, *Calm Waters*, oil on panel, 6 x 12" 27. **Laura Pollak**, *RUBY*, soft pastel on archival paper, 14 x 11" 28. **Sarah M Paddock**, *Early Morning*, oil on linen, 16 x 20"

will be the most effective as a plain drape may go from bland to a shiny satin. A wool rug may become an animal skin. Midway through I have developed my direction, but I always leave space for something unexpected. I want the viewer to find their own meaning in some of my symbolism and connect."

As a still life artist, **Mary Calengor** chooses subjects to paint that are as important as the actual exercise of painting them. She says, "Many of my paintings contain objects that have had a life of their own with stories to tell, if they could. Capturing

objects from the past in paint gives them new life. I feel like a messenger passing these stories on to another generation. If a painting draws the viewer in and evokes a personal reaction or association, the artwork becomes far more valuable to them than just something to fill wall space."

As Calengor moves through her process, it can take multiple layers to re-create the textures and wear an object has undergone throughout the years. From rusted pots to torn and faded leather, it's these little details that Calengor enjoys working with most.

"When choosing a still life," says artist **Linda Mann**, "I always advise collectors to listen to their hearts. A still life, more than any other type of art, inspires quiet contemplation and study. It is an artwork to live with intimately. It should depict a fascinating, dramatic, self-contained world that you find compelling and that you can return to every day with pleasure." Mann paints her still lifes with an understanding of how people see and know the world—not by recording every detail as a camera does, but rather by observing the essential and editing out the unimportant. "In each still



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life, I arrange and light objects carefully, creating a fascinating, intimate world,” she says. Working exclusively from life, without photographic references, she observes and captures the ephemeral, dramatic effects of light and shadow, imbuing everyday objects with weight and meaning.

Chicago-based **33 Contemporary** showcases the work of talented artists such as **Ellen Starr Lyon**, **Kate Van Doren** and **Erica Calardo**.

Lyon is a figurative painter focusing on modern portraiture that revolves around feminism, motherhood and coming of age. Her painting style incorporates a colorful palette and multiple thin, luminous layers with a nod to realism but also the search for something more. “During this time of constant change and fear of the unknown, I find myself looking more and more inward to make sense of the world. I am driven to paint about my ever-evolving experience of woman/wife/mother,” she says.

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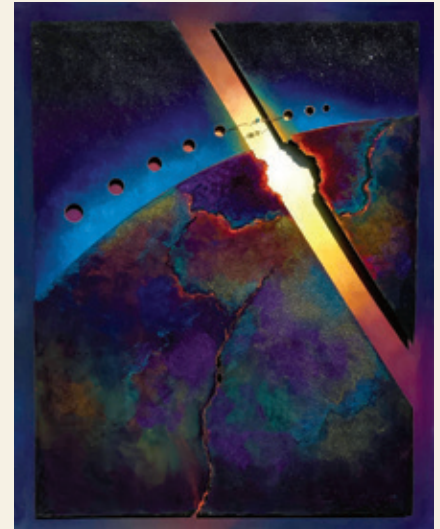
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29. Jennifer Ferris, *Bold & Beautiful*, acrylic on wood panel, 48 x 96" 30. Sarah M Paddock, *Whisper of Jasmine*, oil on linen, 20 x 16" 31. Alina Eydel, *Flutter XVII*, acrylic on canvas with silver and gold leaf, glass bead mosaic and acrylicalized butterfly wings, 48 x 44" (framed) 32. Renel Plouffe, *Intime*, acrylic, 40 x 30" 33. Laura Pollak, *OPEN TO THE UNIVERSE*, soft pastel on archival board, 20 x 16" 34. Jennifer Ferris, *The Simple Joys*, acrylic, 48 x 60" 35. Alina Eydel, *Flutter XV*, acrylic on canvas with silver and gold leaf, glass bead mosaic and acrylicalized butterfly wings, 48 x 44" (framed) 36. Renel Plouffe, *Gratitude*, oil, 40 x 30" 37. Sarah M Paddock, *Bathing In Autumn*, oil on canvas, 15 x 30" 38. Laura Pollak, *TRILLION CUT*, soft pastel on archival paper, 20 x 16"

Italian figurative painter Calardo says, "I am...bringing Old Masters' techniques into a lyrical, symbolic and oneiric contemporary vision influenced by art nouveau. I paint figures of...beauty, eerie and oneiric in their naked nature, floating between worlds."

The foundation for Van Doren's work is capturing the struggle and strength at the heart of the human experience. Never shying away from difficult subject matter around mental and physical health, she joins with others to help tell their stories.

Bronze artist Pamela M Winters pours her love of creation into her sculptures. Detail, movement and expression characterize her work. Over the past few years,

Winters has completed several commissions, which "brings tremendous joy" to both the client and the artist, she says, adding that "your bronze purchase is not only an investment, but an heirloom."

The artwork of award-winning oil painter and watercolorist Crystal Beshara reflects her rural roots—a collision of realism and expressionism. Her subject matter is diverse, from flora and fauna to farmscapes, seascapes and florals. "I strive to paint more than just a 'pretty' painting," she says. "I want to touch the heart, awaken a bit of nostalgia in my viewer and moreover, illuminate subjects that sometimes can easily be overlooked; to transform the mundane

into something beguiling."

Alina Eydel, artist and owner of Eydel Fine Arts, has been exhibiting professionally since 2000 and is best known for her mixed media mosaic techniques of glass bead mosaic and butterfly wing mosaic. Currently, Eydel's work focuses on the interplay of imagery with her mixed media materials. In her *Flutter* series, Eydel intertwines the silhouettes of a couple, just about to kiss, with the background imagery, often butterflies. She finishes the surfaces with a mix of metal leaves, glass bead mosaic and real butterfly wings. The juxtaposition of the materials with the composition creates intricate artwork that, while abstract at



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first glance, merges into focus as the viewer shifts perspective.

“My work is the reflection of the energy of the subject through light and shadow patterns. I am so attracted to bold contrast and the beauty of light on a subject,” says pastel artist **Tara Will**.

Pieces like *Zion Energy* and *Battery Park Palms* exude a sense of dynamism and movement. Her thoughts on collecting reflect many of the previous sentiments: to obtain artwork in which a deep connection is felt. “Be in love,” she says. “Having a collector want to live with your work is

the highest compliment.”

Suzie Seerey-Lester is an internationally renowned wildlife artist and paints only what she sees directly in the wild. Diving headfirst into her subject matter, she is holding an upcoming “master class” in which students will photograph and learn

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39. **Vesna Longton**, *Cherry tree nymph*, 3D glass painting, 24 x 30" 40. **Vesna Longton**, *Transformation*, 3D glass painting with lights, 27¼ x 28¼" 41. **Renel Plouffe**, *Secret*, oil, 20 x 20"

how to paint wolf packs, mountain lions, snow leopards and bears, to name a few.

Laura Pollak delves into the world of three-dimensional pastel art. Her works explore the deep luminescence of natural stones that emit their own captivating glow, as well as glistening jewels and shiny metals that continuously catch her eye. "[My work] explores the crevasses and lesions of our world and opens us to the possibilities of light and hope," says the artist.

Color energizes artist **Jennifer Ferris**, whose work involves constant invention and exploration. "The need to create is an integral part of my being, and a source of great joy. I strive to share that feeling with

the world by painting vibrant, colorful and happy imagery," says Ferris. "Choose artwork that makes you smile, and place it somewhere you will pass it daily."

Painter **Sarah M Paddock** says, "I am always so moved by people's stories. Every individual has a unique history and yet so many of us have shared, lived experiences. So often our stories involve or are surrounded by ordinary sights and common items. My work, as an artist, is to try to capture both something real and something romantic or sentimental about each piece with particularity. I want to reflect the specialness of those thoughts and memories with real consideration and representation of each article in

every piece."

Working with acrylic, oil, pastel, spray paint and charcoal, **Renel Plouffe** creates abstract expressionist paintings that are built in layers. The inspiration behind her art, she says, is "the quest of transition."

Russian-American artist **Vesna Longton** is an innovative creator. Using a multilayer method, she creates three-dimensional glass, three-dimensional resin paintings and sculptures that capture the fantastical and meditative aspects of art.

The artists featured in this section come from different walks of life, and the diversity in their styles, subjects and mediums offer elements of wonder and variety to any art collection. ●

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