



"Yellow Tulips," oil on canva, 12" x 6"

PEACEFUL PORTRAITS OF OUR FAVORITE THINGS

Lael Weyenberg's intimate paintings remind the viewer of everyday beauty.

BY EMILY VAN CLEVE

Lael Weyenberg looks at everything in life with an artist's careful, thoughtful and discerning eye. For her, art and life are inseparable.

"I make a point to surround myself with beauty in my daily life," she explains. "I love the objects I paint."

Lael has developed a reputation for being among the finest still life painters in the country. With one look at her paintings, the viewer immediately knows that she has enormous passion coupled with refined technical talent which results in stunning portrayals of objects that we all hold near and dear to our hearts. Lael's intimate paintings seem to be saying to the viewer, "stop, look and feel the joy of these precious objects."

Flowers are one of Lael's favorite subjects, and she makes many trips to the Santa Fe Farmers Market to find ones with appealing colors and graceful bends of the stem. She fondly remembers how her mother would bring an array of spring flowers into the family home—the sights and smells of the delicate buds are still vivid in her mind. She's always been most attracted to old-fashioned flowers such as peonies, sweet peas and antique roses.

Lael's refrigerator is filled with her "models"—flowers and fruits patiently waiting for their turn to be captured on canvas in all their glory. "I am often seen at the market holding up pears or apples, looking for the ones that appeal to me visually,"

she says. "I look at the color, the way the shadows are held in the blossom end and the length of a stem. I'm not thinking about eating them."

And then there are the shoes. Soft, fragile ballet shoes that remind Lael of her childhood dance lessons. Worn red and white sneakers that she loves to put on when she casually walks around town. Fashionable high heel shoes that are as glamorous as they are feminine.

The first painting of shoes was made after a friend gave her a pair of red furry slippers as a Christmas present. "I loved them," she recalls.

"I thought they would be fun to paint and they were. I hope the viewer feels this sense of fun."



"Le Couvert," on oil canvas, 12" × 16"

Almost anything can capture Lael's attention and demand to be painted. "It's all about light," she says, "the way light falls on a piece of fruit, or early morning light streaming through the window illuminating an interior, the excitement of light playing with shadow and light intensifying or softening color." Using luscious color and impressionistic brushwork her goal is to capture the inherent beauty of the objects and the feelings she's experiencing about them so she can convey a special moment in time.

When Lael sets up a still life, she keeps it simple and includes one or only a few objects. Sometimes still lifes seem to set themselves up.

Lael paints exquisite interior scenes that often include everyday objects from her own cozy adobe home. She also paints landscapes and animals with the same heartfelt emotion with which she creates still life works.

A native of British Columbia who grew up in Washington State, Lael has vivid memories of a childhood filled with deep reverence for nature. By the age of 20 she left Washington and moved to New York to begin experiencing life on her own terms. In her mid twenties she returned to Washington State and settled on Bainbridge Island where, along



"Venice Nocturne," on oil canvas, 9" × 9"



"Empty Nest," on oil canvas, 16" × 12"



"Mixed Fruit," oil on canvas, 10" × 10"



"Just the Apple," oil on canvas, 6" × 6"



"Spring Bouquet," oil on canvas, 12" × 9"

with raising a son, she found many outlets for her creative energies.

Lael painted straw hats which were picked up by a rep and sold to Nordstroms and boutiques across the country. She did delicate French Hand Sewing, made her own clothes, carved stone and worked as a display artist. She was a floral designer and created beautiful gardens. All these endeavors were the creative, visual artistic stepping stones that led her to her deepest passion: painting.

When sunlight splendidly illuminated a section of Bainbridge Island farmland one day, the urge to paint was too strong to resist.

From then on, she's been painting with dedication and passion. Her talent was recognized right from the start as galleries began calling and asking to represent her work. Southwest Art magazine featured her work in its December 2001 issue. In 2003 she earned International Artist's First Prize Award in the magazine's flower and garden painting competition.

"I'm always teaching myself new ways to express what I'm seeing," she explains. "The subject matter asks it of me and challenges me to constantly change and grow as an artist."



"Sweet Peas," oil on canvas, 10" × 10"



"Early Evening, Villa Catigirano, Tuscany" oil on canvas, 12" × 9"

Lael Weyenberg's paintings are represented by McLarry Fine Art, 225 Canyon Road, Santa Fe. Gallery hours: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. (505) 988-1161 or 1-877-983-2123. www.mclarryfineart.com