

Focus on Art

By Rob Mohr

Elizabeth Skelsey – An Australian Artist in Ajjic



In an open garage on Constitution in Ajjic, a laptop and a mainframe computer, coated with layers of paint, somehow continue to provide music, pictures and communication, as Elizabeth

Skelsey, a remarkable woman artist, creates painting after painting.

“I don’t hold art as a sacred sort of thing – it’s the work I can do. I wanted to be a musician, but my talent was visual. I love being in front of a canvas.”

Elizabeth who holds a Master’s degree from Sydney University, College of Fine Arts, confided, “My real education comes from the streets of Sydney where homeless friends like Alex Tromph taught me cultural anthropology in ways no university could.”

This street education informed her painting, *The Problem Child* (photo), which appears at first to be an interaction between two exuberant women posed in front of three bright windows opening on a garden. But a more careful examination reveals a very different world, one ablaze with an effervescent light and profound symbolic meaning. The two women are the ‘yin and yang’ interacting in a complex, multi layered, web of connections and synergies that emerge as a unified whole.

“The universe was one, then became two - creator and created, each a complementary reality with components of the other.”

The painting delineates the artist’s understanding of the bifurcation of the universe with rich symbolic associations - one figure holds a bouquet of flowers, the gift of consciousness; the three small cakes on the table represent Father, Son and Holy Spirit; glasses of wine, the blood of Christ; the Bible on the right, marked by footsteps, represents human sin. We are thrust into a world where the unexpected comes to life as a vivid, seriously considered fictional dream.

Her anomalous, ‘super-real’ painting (*Weavers*) unveils a world occupied by two indigenous women who are carding, spinning, and dyeing wool for their weaving. Other works such as *Dresser*

and

Lilly Pads

invite the viewer to look into secret, mysterious worlds hidden within the everyday. And her painting

Overgrown Garden

, glows with a light that permeates and brings to life a garden of stunning beauty. (*Skelsen

link.)

Paintings that have instructed her include Stanley Spencer's (1891-1959) luminescent, "bread-and-butter" landscapes; Jenny Seville's (1970-) uncompromising paintings of the human body; and Lucian Freud's (1922- a grandson of Sigmund) meticulous paintings such as *The Larger Interior* (1983) which reveals a haunting, provocative vision of humanity. Elizabeth's comprehensive understanding of the development of painting since the 1850s gives her a keen understanding that the dream created cannot be interrupted by mistakes or conscious ploys that make the artist the subject. She unerringly runs straight at the image being created. (*See links below)

To watch Elizabeth paint is revealing. She unfolds her painting as a series of completed components, which, when joined, become a unified whole. She may begin in a corner or in the center creating a detailed component, and then invariably work in magical steps until the complete structure emerges. At that juncture, she adds light, texture, and layering to bring the work into final harmony. The act of painting is organic and carried forward by her senses.

"I follow my nose a day at a time. My fully realized paintings come into being and then transcend themselves to become a third entity."

What does the future hold for this mature artist?

"What I would like to do now is dissect an object, or a reality, and paint everything visible and invisible that goes into their creation."

This "deconstructive" approach is already evident in her current works.

*Elizabeth's works are on exhibition and for sale from her studio/home at 30 Constitution, Ajijic, and through **Galeria La Manzanilla**, Manzanilla, Jalisco www.artinmexico.com.

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Links:

Skelsey <http://inkgal8290.deviantart.com/gallery/>