

ARTIST STATEMENT

I strive to paint beautiful paintings. There is no implied complex meaning or desire to use painting metaphors. I find beauty in the way the light reflects off the wooden surface, the way the hair merges with the background, the contrast of warm and cool subtleties in the model's skin, the thickness of the stroke itself and what I can achieve with it. I want to pull the viewer into my world I create, and follow the calculated compositional arrangement that I intended.

Ideas for new paintings are developed in my head over time, feeding on my experiences and visual knowledge of paintings before me. It's not necessarily planned or deliberate. Sometimes they slowly mature, and they do not let me go until I pay them attention. It may be a reflection on the copper dipper that I just can't get out my head, or the warm shadow under someone's arm against the wood. Slowly, the whole composition starts to develop. I don't necessarily have an exact replica of what I am about to do in my head, but I have a very clear idea of the purpose, the composition and the flow of light. Sometimes I even know where the underpainting will show through, where I would paint thickly, some more abstract qualities would start to shape up. Then I work on finding pieces – or models – to implement it. It's almost a physical need to express, and to clear the way for something else that is developing. It's who I am, more so than what I want to do – I will need to continue painting regardless of how many pieces were sold. I am very fortunate to have this outlet to express myself and to continue to develop and train it through years of education and artistic career.

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY AND OTHER SUPPORTING INFORMATION

I started to draw at a very young age, and I clearly remember my drawings being copied regularly while in kindergarten. That's also when I had my first solo show. I then enrolled in a formal academic program at the Kazan Art School – a 4-year intense art curriculum with subjects such as Drawing, Watercolor, Composition, Sculpture and Art History. 7 hours a week plus homework, plus plain air summer practice. From boxes and cylinders to complex plaster casts. From limited still life arrangements to elaborate textures and compositions. Those who couldn't take it were weeded out. Those who finished it had strong skills and freedom to create. I heard once an Art teacher in my college telling a student – “if you can't make the cup stand on the table and it floats, then make it the most beautiful floating cup and explore that.” That was an absolutely opposite of my art school. There, the response would be – “You have to make it stand. Assess perspective, assess your ellipses. Make it stand no matter what. Once you know how to make it stand on the table, then in the future you could make deliberate decisions if you have a floating cup idea. But it wouldn't be because you lack skill.”

Now having my own kids and looking back at that pretty grueling experience – not to mention long evenings on top of the regular school – I am both so glad I went through it, and so amazed at how serious the education and time commitment was required from a young artist. On top of the technical skills it developed discipline. Art was taken very seriously in that environment. The pride in Russian art was emanating from the walls. While in my last year, I also represented my school in the City Still Life competition – live watercolor painting among hundreds of other art students – and I won the 2nd place in the City. That and finishing top of my art class were my first significant achievements that I still value very highly.

It could be because of the grueling work over the course of 4 years on top of the regular school work, it could be because I was not aware of contemporary successes in the Fine Art at the time (at least not as a main career choice) – but I didn't pursue art as a formal career after graduation. But no matter what I did in my life and what paths I took, art continued to be a very important and necessary part of my life. I also continued to study Art History and even worked at Sotheby's for a year to fulfill a long dream. And I continued to draw and paint, without a specific plan, but just because I needed to do it. And there came the time when this need grew into something so big and ambitious that there was no way to take another path. After graduating from the Art School, I didn't want it this bad. It took me years to realize this and to grow the awareness that this is who I was. With time I became an MBA graduate, a successful technology professional. Yet my need to draw and paint was so strong, so engrained in me, that I had to find a way and discipline to pursue both paths side by side for a while.

I continued to find ways to grow and develop into an artist that I wanted to become. I took every opportunity to study and research. I continue this practice every day. I took drawing classes with Glen Orbik (Jeremy Lipking's drawing teacher), then oil painting workshop and classes with Jeremy. The day I came to Glen's 1st class in California Art Institute and inhaled the smell of the easel and pen shavings, I felt I was home again. I had a flash back to the Kazan Art Studio, and I was very moved to realize just how much I missed this smell and this environment. I knew I couldn't let it go anymore. I got hold of every DVD and uTube video of Sherrie McGraw and David Level, I discovered Richard Schmid, Susan Lyon and Scott Burdick, and my exciting (and a very serious) journey took a new shape. It's been mostly an independent journey, as I continue to analyze paintings and develop my skills. I've been influenced by Repin, Serov, Brullov, Levitan, Kramskoy, Fechin and other Russian titans ever since I was a kid. Then I discovered Sargent, Zorn, Sorolla and Cecilia Beaux, and to this day I continue to build my visual vocabulary examining the movement, the bold brushstrokes and the value arrangements in their pieces. The biggest impact on me from the living masters in the recent years are Jeremy Lipking's huge universe of grays and Sherrie McGraw's bold and yet so graceful paint handling. It would be a tremendous experience to be able to talk to the mentor live to continue to grow my technical abilities.

I usually participate in Portrait Society of America International Competition, Oil Painters of America National and Western Regional shows and American Women Artists National Show. This year I also exhibited in the Women Painting Women Annual show. My biggest recognition that I am very fortunate to have are the 3rd Honor Award (2014) and Certificate of Excellence (2011) from the Portrait Society of America International Competition.