



PEGGIE BLIZARD

Bold & Beautiful

Floral still lifes are by no means a groundbreaking genre but in the hands of Peggie Blizard they are as original as the fresh cut blossoms that fill every inch of her canvases.

The larger-than-life scale of her subjects is only one quality that set Blizard's florals apart from more traditional approaches. She places her riotous blooms in transparent bell jars that showcase her skill in capturing the bending of light and the distortion it creates as it passes through the glass. She enhances the effect by pushing flower petals down into the water, creating a mirror-like image of color.

"Every painting is a challenge so to speak," says Blizard. "Trompe l'oeil is always a challenge. The point is to make the image seem to jump off the page and engage the viewer. This requires tremendous skill and patience and has been my goal with each painting. During my work with objects, I have become aware of how light is transformed by passing through glass, especially Mason jars. I began to paint these jars with water, and found the facets formed visually exciting abstract shapes. I added flowers to impart color and visual appeal and found these forms were a striking counterpoint to the more curvilinear forms of the facets of the jar."

Blizard has been painting still lifes since her college days at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, beginning with simple objects. "This was so much fun to a novice painter and I just never got beyond that feeling," she says. She has tackled many subjects other than flowers over the years, including a sustained interest in rendering sheer fabric. After seeing an exhibit of Spanish still-life painter Luis Meléndez (1716-1780) in the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C., she began to incorporate his inky backgrounds. There was also a period when she left painting altogether and focused on abstract etchings.

As artists working in realism often say, essentially all painting is abstract, meaning that, in order for it to work compositionally, the abstract principles of how the shapes relate to one another and the confines of the canvas also apply to representational art.

"In *Pink Petunias*, pink and yellow down in the jar adds to the abstract qualities of the piece," says Blizard. "Also, I try to make it appear that the flowers are not 'arranged' but simply shoved into the water...perhaps the phone has rung or there's someone at the door or the soup has begun to warm up. We need to look for the beauty in the randomness of life, because that's really

1
Pink Petunias, oil on panel, 24 x 18"

2
Summer Flowers, oil on panel, 24 x 18"

3
Yellow Rose, oil on panel, 24 x 18"





3

where most of it is.”

The casual appearance of the bouquets, of course, is an illusion. Blizzard carefully arranges the flowers, sourced from her backyard when possible, based on principles of basic design. “This is where the abstract aspect of art comes in,” she says. “If you look at the outline of the jar of flowers as an object, I always ask, ‘How

does this larger object relate to the sides of the surface? Is it balanced?’ Sometimes I may feel a need to add or remove something in order to achieve this.”

Blizzard is also guided by questions like “how to create a work of art and not just an artwork? And how to infuse poetry into a piece and give it meaning and beauty?”

“I am still looking for this answer with

each painting I do,” she says. Blizzard’s most recent work along this quest will be featured in an exhibition at George Billis Gallery in New York from March 5 through March 30, with an opening reception on March 7 from 6 to 8 p.m. ●

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