

A Technique That's as Thick as Life

Jennifer Vranes *Lays Success on Thick*



Jennifer Vranes paints large, vibrant painting, full of color and, especially, texture. Trees—particularly aspens—and landscapes are her favorite subjects. An avid traveler, Vranes finds inspiration from the beautiful places she has seen around the world. Through her landscapes, she transports viewers to Tuscany, where poppies grow wildly in breathtaking meadows; or to France, where fragrant lavender is farmed in lush rows; or to the Rocky Mountains, where groves of aspens stand

near rolling streams and rivers.

Her technique, though, may be what sets her apart from most other painters. She uses a palette knife to “sculpt” the paint onto the canvas, a traditional, if seldom seen, painting method. And it has become a favorite among galleries and collectors worldwide. “Over the past 10 years, my paintings have evolved dramatically. Every year my texture gets thicker,” Vranes says.

But she wasn’t always a landscape painter. “Actually when I was an art student in college, I painted only realistic portraits and figures in oils. It was after I graduated that I tried my first real land-

scape. I felt liberated with giant paint brushes and palette knives. I knew then that landscapes were what I was meant to paint.”

Painting landscapes goes even further back for her. Vranes says that she can’t really remember a time when she didn’t love to draw or paint. “Being the oldest girl of eight sisters, hosting drawing competitions was a part of everyday life! I was drawing long before I could write,” she says. “I remember thinking I was a real artist when I won ‘first place’ for best drawing on a bookmark in the first grade. Even then, I had drawn a picture of a colorful flower under a bright blue sky with white clouds,

BY JOHN F.D. TAFF, • ABN CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

and a happy sun!”

It was that early interest in art, and even doodling, that eventually led her to study art in college. That and some support from a high school art teacher.

“Surprisingly I didn’t take any art classes in high school until my senior year. I’d actually been planning on majoring in English, like my Dad, but my high school art teacher, Mr. Coelho, helped change my mind. He noticed me doodling one day, liked what he saw and convinced me to take his drawing 1 class the following semester. I did, and I really loved it! My confidence as an artist really grew that semester.”

That support made such an impression on her that every time she had a gallery show, she’d send him a postcard. But it would be 14 years until they were reunited at a solo show for a local gallery in 2006. Vranes had invited Mr. Coelho to attend the reception, where she finally had the opportunity to tell him how much of an inspiration he’d been for her.

“I don’t think he ever really knew,” Vranes says. “He did ask me, though, if I would come speak to one of his art classes. So I taught a two-day class to his students

in his last year teaching. I was a student in his first class of his first year teaching, so this was pretty special helping him teach in his final year!”

With Coelho’s encouragement, Vranes studied oil painting at Brigham Young University, graduating with a bachelor of fine arts degree. You might wonder what it was like getting an art degree from a conservative college like Brigham Young University.

“Well, for one thing we never painted from nude models! You had to go to the next town over for that,” she jokes. “But as far as the art program went, I thought it was a very good one. The classes followed a more traditional approach; emphasizing good ‘technique’ and core fundamentals of art—which I think even abstract painters should know. But it was the oil painting classes that I loved most. I never thought of specializing in anything else.”

So, what’s her style? That’s hard for her to answer. “I really don’t fit into any category that has existed previously,” she responds. “If I had to pick one, I’d have to say ‘Contemporary-Impressionist.’ I like to think of my work as ‘Impressionism with a twist!’ Though I paint with a



“Heaven Above”

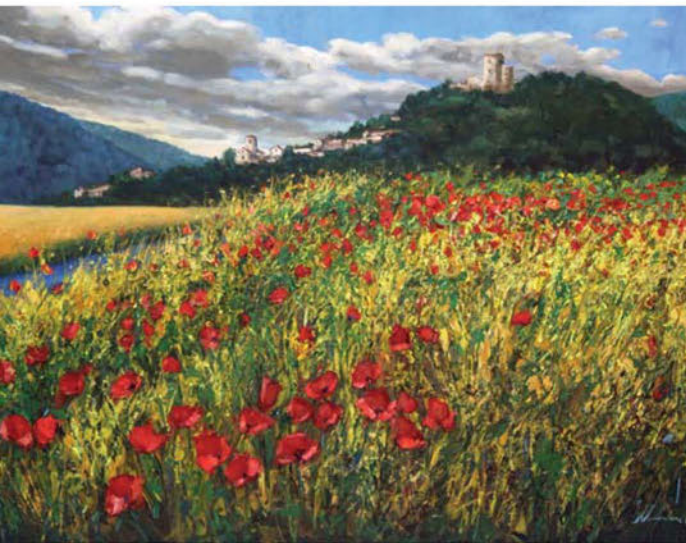
lot more color and a bit more attention to detail, my extreme texture is what makes my paintings unique.

“Places that would have texture in life, I like to give texture to in my painting. The sky and water, for example, remain smooth, while the trunks of trees or fields of flowers are highly textured. I call this technique, ‘Textures of Life™.’ My paintings are truly three-dimensional.”

A lifelong talent for art, some well-timed encouragement and her style firmly in place, Vranes went into the world, just waiting for inspiration to strike. And it didn’t take long. She loves to travel, and her travels have taken her places where



“The Colors of Provence”



"Tuscan Poppies"

inspiration is as thick as her technique.

"I love to travel. I always have my camera with me ready to snap a shot if I happen to see something interesting. I especially love the poppy fields of Italy in spring, and the lavender fields of France in late summer. I like to see what beautiful gems of nature other parts of the world have to offer. I also have a deep fondness for aspen trees and travel to Colorado and Utah each year during the fall just so I can capture the beautiful shift of autumn color," she says.

Vranes' bold and colorful paintings are on the move, too. Her artwork has been published in numerous magazines, including right here in ABN. Vranes' unique paintings are also gaining momentum on an international level. The U.S. State Department placed her art in the "ART in Embassies" collection in Bamako, Mali.

"The most frequent compliment I receive from Collectors is that my paintings make them happy! They are bright, colorful pieces of art that are easy to digest and understand. The extremely

thick texture draws them in and makes them feel as if they are really in a forest of trees or amidst a field of red poppies. The textural quality of my work creates a very tactile element that most paintings just don't possess."

So, how does she do it—paint, manage her business, manage her life? "That's a good question!" she laughs. "Life is pretty busy with three boys and a little girl—all under 11. I've heard it said that 'busy people get the most things done!' Every second has to count. My best time is late at night when the house is quiet and all are in bed. This is when I know I won't be disturbed. I'm a night owl, so it works. I rarely go to bed before midnight.

She credits her husband with keeping the business up and running, allowing her to concentrate on two things—being inspired and painting. "Our business, Jen's Art, really couldn't run without my husband. He's the left brain in the operation. He keeps up the website, talks to the galleries and clients, packages and ships the paintings. All I really have to do is hide in the studio and paint! We're a really good team. And we're living our dream of having a family business that's



"Autumn Wonder"



"Aspen Symphony"



"Spring Reflection"

flexible enough for us to spend a lot of time together with our kids."

In the end, though, all the talent and inspiration in the world won't help if the artist doesn't understand the art market and how to run a business in today's world.

"Most artists think that all you need to do to make money is get into a few galleries," Vranes says. "While brick-and-mortar galleries are an important part of the business, there's a lot more to it than that. Good marketing is important. Branding yourself. Having a style and subject matter that appeal to the majority of people is important, too. I'm just lucky that what I love to paint and that the way I paint happens to coincide with what the public wants." **ABN**

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