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Artist to Collect

Trisha Adams







previous spread, *Beyond the Lavender*, 24" x 30"
above, *Wild Bunch*, 36" x 36"
right, *Violet Hydrangeas*, 40" x 30"

Colour Me Bold

written by Lorie Lee Steiner

Exuberance emanates from each and every Trisha Adams creation. A joie de vivre that comes from the very soul of this lively contemporary impressionist, infusing her still lifes and landscapes with vibrant happy hues. Representational with a dash of abstraction. Deeply contemplated, yet going off script when exaggeration is in order. "When I paint, my aim is not to render an object per se," says Trisha, "instead I record the pattern of coloured shapes. When I step back, the shapes coalesce into things, people and places. It feels like magic."

Born and raised in sunny California, Trisha graduated from William Jewell College in Liberty, Missouri, with a year's

honour study in Oxford, England. Travel was, and continues to be, a tremendous creative and intellectual stimulus. She graduated with a degree in psychology, but it was her work as editor of the college yearbook that sparked her choice of vocation. After college, she moved to Virginia, closer to family, and began working for a local newspaper in their advertising department. Computer savvy, she quickly transitioned to desktop publishing and opened her own graphic design firm in 1985. Five years later, she sold the business and later joined a colour printing company, spearheading their electronic prepress department and retail service bureau.

Enter the children. Trisha recalls, "Coinciding with a move from Maryland to Virginia, I began homeschooling our two sons. Homeschooling was a lot of fun and I refer to that time as my 'Renaissance years,' since I got to study right





T. ADAMS



above, *Tucked In*, 24" x 30"
left, *Beaufort Boats*, 30" x 24"

alongside my boys. When their education was complete, I took the plunge to pursue painting." Trisha has now been painting for twelve years and is a member of the Washington Society of Landscape Painters.

Feeling the Joy

The use of colour and an underlying abstractness combine to give Trisha's paintings a distinctive and recognizable style. The power her artwork has to immediately brighten a room, and the viewer's disposition, is no accident. Trisha is a scholar of colour, specializing in its relationship to light and shadow. "I am interested in the way a painting – a flat, inanimate object – can evoke feelings, especially those of joy, whimsy, wistfulness or serenity," she notes. "I believe the aesthetic response to colour harmonies is responsible for stimulating these feelings, and for that reason much of my study has focused on colour."

Instructing others on her relaxed, innovative approach to brushwork is a genuine pleasure for Trisha. In workshops such as 'Loosen Up: Strategies to Add Life to your Painting,' this accomplished, confident artist passes along valuable ideas and techniques gleaned from personal experience, to students of all ages. She credits her strength of character and positive outlook to her father, the strongest influence in

her life. "He is contemplative, slow to anger and highly principled. He taught me the attitudes that bring happiness. My friend and fellow painter, Arleen Turzo, says that everything you are shows in everything you do. I am exuberant and my paintings tell that story."

Trisha travels often in search of inspirational locales and new terrain – mountains, hills, marshes, cliffs, beaches – with changing plant life, architecture and shifting colour palettes. Water scenes are especially inspiring. After painting in Provence for 7 summers, she now finds herself drawn to Italy, where she'll be teaching in breathtaking Montorno again this June. Every year, artists flock to this most hospitable retreat to paint, study and soak up the Italian culture. All levels of experience are welcome at the mountainside studio, adjacent to an ancient vintner's home above the picturesque Tuscan village of Seravezza. It is the essence of creative freedom. www.montorno.com

Days of Light and Shadow

Dedicated studio space is not a must-have. Trisha can paint just about anywhere as long as there is good light. Winter used to be troublesome because of diminished daylight, but even that doesn't faze her anymore. Music while working is a necessity, though. Lively music that makes her want to sing and dance.





left, *Welcome*, 36" x 36"
right top, *Winter Sunshine*, 16" x 20"
right bottom, *Swaying Poppies*, 24" x 30"



Breaking Through, 30" x40"

Questioning the motivation behind a potential new work is essential for getting in the proper mindset. Trisha says, "Before beginning something new, I always contemplate three things. The first is, Why do I want to paint this? Knowing what I want to convey about the scene, I construct the painting to tell that story. I may be interested by a repetition of shapes, dramatic light or, as it is most often, striking colour. When I've found something interesting, I exaggerate it so that the viewer will see it, too. One of my favourite exhortations from 'Hawthorne on Painting' is: "See brilliant colour and paint it just a little more brilliantly." One can exaggerate colour as long as the relationships are intact."

Secondly, she studies the composition, how the eye will move through the painting, looking especially for lines and shapes that lead to her area of interest. Only lines that point to the center of interest are emphasized. The others fade into the background.

The third subject up for exploration before the actual painting process begins is the colour of the light. Trisha states, "As you may be aware, light has a colour cast and the shadow is complementary. I note the overall colour relationship, so that I am sure to capture it. Next, I begin to lay down marks on the canvas. I do not draw the contour of the objects. Instead, I note the shape of light on the object and the shape of the shadow. Representational painting is essentially the portrayal of light. Light and shadow make form, so this is an important story to tell. I also know that the light unifies everything that it falls on – both in value and in colour. The same is true for the shadow. This is the main simplification that I make."

Once the drawing is sketched in, painting begins on the light side and the shadow side of the same object, trying to capture the relationship. "I work all around the painting, relating the first object to all the others and to the background. How can I



Lavender Vista, 30" x40"

know that it relates correctly unless I have a little of everything down? As I put down each stroke, I observe the subtle colour changes as I go. Has it gotten duller and more purple? Maybe the next stroke needs to be more reddish-brown?"

A Marvelous Mosaic

Trisha's initial foray into making art was torn paper collages, similar to a mosaic. But paint being much more immediate she soon switched over. Over time, she has explored acrylics and watercolour, however, oil won out as the medium of choice. Today, her approach to painting still reflects the nature of a mosaic – "the strokes are just coloured pieces next to each other that the mind joins together."

Early in her painting career, Trisha's focus was on colour. But creative life is all about change. "Now," she acknowledges, "my study is centered on brushstrokes and edges. Brushstrokes support the composition and add energy, while the play

of hard and soft edges allows the eye to flow through the painting with ease and establish what is important. Ask me again in five years what I am working on and you will probably get a different answer. That is what is wonderful about painting, it is endlessly interesting."

Paintings with confident brushwork and bravado are Trisha's favourites. As such, she is impressed by the work of artists Tibor Nagy, (the late) Ted Goerschner and Alex Kanevsky. In her own paintings, the brushstrokes are a key element. Applied boldly, the energy remains in the mark and enlivens the work. She says, "No attempt is made to fool the viewer that the subject is real. Instead, the painting is my take on things. Just as a writer picks and chooses the details to include and the words to flavour or slant a story, I edit the content of the painting."

Trisha still does a fair number of commissions, though many artists would think her approach is somewhat unusual. She explains, "Rather than



Wild Poppies, 30" x 30"



Stewart's Blaze, 30" x 30"





Red and Orange Tulips, 36" x 36"



So Sunny, 30" x 30"

making a sketch or small version of the painting for approval, I launch right into the full-scale painting. It is just as easy for me to paint the actual painting as it is to do a small one. Most of the time, the painting is precisely what the collector was hoping for, but occasionally it misses the mark. If that happens, I paint a new version based on the collector's additional comments. Sometimes people think this sounds like too much work, but, for me, it is the same amount of work to create a new painting as it is to make revisions to an existing one." She adds, "Making a new painting has the advantage of being fresher and freer than reworking the original. Of course it is simpler to paint for oneself, but I agree with the saying that a painting is not complete until the viewer enjoys it."

For Trisha, the opportunity to meet the collectors and see their delight with her finished work is a large part of what makes the work

gratifying. The rest comes from the process itself, from vision to creation to completion, an ultimate inner satisfaction that artists of every genre experience and appreciate.

In Living Colour

When it comes to exploration and tropical adventure – both as destination and dinner – Trisha has her priorities straight. She jokes, "My favorite food is Mexican. Guacamole and margaritas are in my desert island Top 10. I wouldn't live that long on guac and margs, but I would be happy while I lasted!"

In the case of Trisha Adams, it's true – art really does imitate life. The proof is in the paintings, where this artist's colourful personality quite literally flows from creator to canvas. Her animated brushstrokes and vivid juxtaposition of hues lift familiar scenes and subjects out of the ordinary and place them in a realm where



Delicious, 30" x 30"

happiness rules in living colour. In the artist's words, "One can pursue painting for a lifetime, because it is endlessly filled with discovery and experimentation. I invite you to share that journey with me."

Follow the artistic adventures of Trisha Adams at www.TrishaAdams.com.
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TRISHA ADAMS

CONTEMPORARY IMPRESSIONIST

