



The Art of Suzanne M. Packer: Capturing the Color, Light and Movement of Cape Cod

by Nicola Burnell



Blue Bureau XII, oil on canvas

The vibrant artwork of Suzanne M. Packer is inspired by the landscapes, moods and ever changing light of Cape Cod. In compositions that capture her love for the complexities of human emotion, color and form create a response to an environment that many Cape residents may take for granted.

"I am very fortunate to have had the opportunities to paint the wonderful views of the Cape over the years. Painting the same places over and over always shows me a new insight, a new perspective on the subject," explains the award-winning artist.

"I learned this at The Rhode Island School of Design when we were given assignments that would use the same object many different times and in many different ways. I use this now in my still life paintings, painting familiar objects that I grew up with and with the landscapes that are everywhere on Cape Cod."

Like most of us who love to call Cape Cod home, Suzanne is a washashore. She moved to the Cape in 1982, after living in Mexico and London, where she'd enjoyed access to some of the best art galleries and museums.

It is this rich history of culture that gives her a unique eye that can turn a simple shoreline into an abstract image of movement and timelessness.



Cape Waters VIII, oil on linen

The fluid blend of brilliant color in Cape Waters VIII, for example, was inspired by the view Suzanne sees when she stands at the edge of a pond and looks down into the depths of the water and contemplates the reflections on the water.

"Often, at the edges, there is a collection of rotting leaves and twigs, or of new ones recently dropped into the water. So many colors and shapes can be found at these ponds."

While some parents may flinch when their children announce "I want to be an artist," clinging to the notion that

art is a "hobby" and not a career, Suzanne's parents not only understood her creative aspirations; they helped her to pursue them.

"My parents, who were supportive of my desire to be an artist, took me frequently to the art museums in New York City," she recalls.

They also took her to Provincetown and Gloucester in the summers, and sent her to the Art Students League in New York, and the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, RI. "My Dad, an artist and illustrator, would also give me painting lessons as a child."

Suzanne continued this family focus on art with her two sons, creating paintings and pottery at their kitchen table.

As the first director of the Cape Museum of Fine Arts, now the Cape Cod Museum of Art, Suzanne was into numerous artists' studios and introduced to collections of art by past artists associated with Cape Cod.

When she left this position in 1992, to paint full time, she was already either a member of or acquainted with the many art associations and museums on Cape Cod. "I realized when I started to paint full time again, after a ten-year hiatus, that I had been training my eye all of that time."

Despite long hours spent working alone in her studio, Suzanne is also very active in many community programs. "I enjoy the interaction with other professionals and it is a way for me to contribute to the Cape Cod community," she explains. "With the Cape Cod Women's Organization, we started the month long program called Women Creating. For five years I was the chair of the Festival of the Arts, which supports the Creative Arts Center in Chatham."

She just completed a nine-year term serving on the board of the Cultural Center of Cape Cod and is still an active teacher and volunteer for their programs. Her most recent project was with students from Harwich High School and the non-profit Hollywood HEART group, which introduces students to the art of making movies.

Suzanne spent a week in February with the Harwich students at the Cultural Center as they worked on the writing, acting and filming of a movie the students both wrote and produced. "It was awesome."

Created for an invitational show at The Provincetown Art Association and Museum, Tulips By the Bay is an example of how Suzanne takes a still life object as her starting point, creates a strong composition around that point, then adds color to her brushes in response to her emotions about the objects she is painting.



Tulips By the Bay, oil on canvas.

"I was given a charcoal drawing by Ferol Sibel Warton, from the permanent collection, and asked to paint my interpretation of it for their Secret Garden tour and exhibition. I had to paint my interpretation of it for their Secret Garden tour and exhibition. I had to study how she had done the drawing. I learned from this experience and it started my putting still life set ups in front of water views."

Suzanne is currently a member of the group known as 21 In Truro. She finds this group of women artists to be a wonderful support group for an artist who spends so many days alone in her large, sunlit studio near the Bass River.

"The week long retreat in Truro is a time for reflection, sharing art ideas, and painting," she says. The 21 In Truro annual shows have also given Suzanne an additional venue to show her paintings.

In addition to continuing work on her abstract and still life paintings, Suzanne is also participating in a "shared art project" with the Cape Cod branch of the National League of American Pen Women.

For this project, which will exhibit in October, members in art, letters and music have banded together to create an exhibit where the artists have painted to poetry, writers have written to artwork and dancers perform to the collected art and writing.



In the Meadow of My Mind, oil on linen

This painting is Suzanne's piece for the project. "I was given the poem, In the Meadow of My Mind, by Christie Palmer, a writer member. Her poem inspired this painting, based on my memories of Cape Cod meadows with ponds and trees. I used a three part design with different color values in each part to give the feeling of how we remember the same scene in different ways at different times."

Like so many artists who live on Cape Cod, Suzanne is never lost for inspiration. She is constantly expanding her horizons as both an artist and a supportive member of the Cape's creative community. "The Cape is a great place to be an artist," she enthuses. "There are so many ways that I have found support and learning experiences here."

To view more of Suzanne's artwork visit: www.suzannepacker.com

UPCOMING EVENTS WITH SUZANNE

Black & White

Invitational for members of
Brickbottom Artists Association
Brickbottom Gallery, Somerville, MA

April 18 through May 22
Reception, Sunday, April 18, 6 - 8 pm
Extended hours, noon to 6 PM during Somerville
Open Studios, May 1 and 2

Flowers in the Vault

Solo exhibition featuring flowers and still life
oil paintings by Suzanne
Vault Gallery, Cultural Center of Cape Cod
South Yarmouth, MA

May 18 through May 23
Painting demo, 10 to 3, May 22

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Nicola teaches Reiki, Personal Empowerment workshops, novel writing & creativity development classes. She also works as a personal and professional consultant.

Nicola is a member in Letters of the National League of American Pen Women and an active participant in the Cape Cod Time Bank.

She lives in Harwich with her two teenage sons and several pets.