



points of
i n s p i r a t i o n
an artist's journey with painting and photography



LeeAnn Brook

points of
i**n**spiration



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insp*i*ration
an artist's journey with painting and photography

Paintings, photography, design and text by LeeAnn Brook

Foreword by Molly Fisk

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DEDICATION

To Robert, Lindsay and Kelsey:
my biggest fans
and most honest critics.



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Stillpoint, 48" x 48" collage painting on canvas



foreword

Molly Fisk

Speaking as a writer, one of the things I love about visual art is how it's presented all at once. There's no sneaking up on it, or it sneaking up on you, in the way a piece of music may unfold or a novel can begin and then hold you with new characters or a plot twist on page 127. Even sculptors have the luxury of three dimensions: as you walk around Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*, those expressive folds of cloth that make up the backs of their garments are revealed.

One can certainly discover more about a two-dimensional piece with careful study, but that's up to you and what you're willing to invest in it. All its cards—painting, photograph, collage, mural, textile—are there on the table the first moment you set eyes on it.

This makes the task of the visual artist different from that of poets, choreographers, playwrights, and composers. The element of time is removed from the toolbox. And as is often the case, with fewer tools available, you have to make the ones you have work a little harder to achieve the effects you want. Color, composition, light and shadow, focus, the three-dimensionality of brush stroke or the drama of photographic contrast—they're all used with a little more fervor, as if perhaps there's more at stake.

In LeeAnn Brook's *Points of Inspiration*, the artist brings time back into play, but not as part of the relationship with her audience. In a generous move, Brook shows us how time is a part of her creative process, linking paintings, her photographs of nature, and collages together over the many years she's been a working artist. Some connections are chronologically straightforward: this lake seen on this hike and photographed, later influenced the colors in this painting. But some are mysterious. A painting she made decades ago turns out to blend the same colors as a group of flowers photographed last Saturday at the Farmers' Market. This linking is partly the result of a trained and very specific eye. But it's partly, like all creative expression, magic.

Brook takes us on a tour of her work, showing what was influential, even decades before a painting's beginning, and what her finished pieces have in turn influenced. It's a lovely introduction to her aesthetic and a fascinating look into one artist's process. The perennial question we ask of most creative people, if only in our minds, is: "How did you even *think* of that?"

This elegant book is devoted to answering that question.

*Poet Molly Fisk writes commentary for community radio and NPR. She's a grantee of the National Endowment for the Arts, the California Arts Council, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and has twice been nominated for Poet Laureate of California. Her most recent books are *Blow-Drying a Chicken* (commentary) and *The More Difficult Beauty* (poems). She teaches on-line via her business Poetry Boot Camp and can be reached at mollyfisk.com.*

“Nothing is ever the same as they said it was.
It’s what I’ve never seen before that I recognize.”

—DIANE ARBUS,
1960s photographer

introduction

Inspiration comes in many forms. Some say it comes from within, some say it comes out of the blue. I believe it’s both. I believe our greatest inspiration starts with a personal connection: to a place, a feeling, a color. My connection comes from nature, so I frequently photograph the landscape, giving me a library of images as a resource for my next painting. An inspiring image may show up when I least expect it: the side of a rusted boat, the organic pattern of a cobblestone street, the movement of light on a quaking aspen. Taking note of what catches my eye with a camera makes me pay attention to my surroundings and has also helped me develop a sensitivity to our natural environment. These images can influence my work in the future, or may be a reflection of what I have painted in the past. Whether it be photography or painting, I am constantly amazed at how one inspires the other in such a rich way. This book is about that journey.

My Beginning

My father is responsible for opening my eyes to our natural world. I wish he knew me now, and I wish I knew him. Passing away when I was six years old, he was in a convalescent home the last time I saw him. With limited visitation hours, one day he hurried me out to the gardens outside his room. With his large magnifying glass in hand, he led me over to a mountain laurel in bloom and showed it to me under the glass. I was amazed at the detail inside the blush-pink blossom, its orange stamens collectively reaching up for the next honeybee. My father said nothing, but even at six years old, I knew it was important to him that I see this. Twenty years later, I finally made the connection. He wanted me to really **see**.



The author, plein air painting in Tuscany, Italy

My Inspiration

I carry images of my future paintings around in my head for weeks and months at a time, letting them dwell long enough to consider all the possibilities. Driving, falling to sleep at night, and waking up in the morning are my optimal think-times, when I imagine how the painting will take shape. Inspiration may come from a walk in a garden the day before, or from a photo I shot several years ago. It may come from the color of my Italian tablecloth, or from a rain-streaked windowpane at a restaurant. Whatever the source, I play out in my mind the painting I want to create. My goal is for viewers to feel as though they are in the painting and part of the landscape.



At age 15, I lugged a large 2 ¼" format Yashica camera around with me for weeks, experimenting with it as if it was a new paintbrush. The process of learning to operate the camera and develop the prints in a darkroom opened up a whole new world. The opportunity of a loaned camera from my high school graphic arts department resulted in this shot. Diamond Lake, the lake at the doorstep of my home in Connecticut, became a personal source of continual inspiration for both my painting and photography.

My Studios

I have two studios: a business studio and a working studio. My business studio occupies one floor of my home where I inventory and display my work. I conduct all aspects of business there, such as meeting with collectors and marketing, and photographing and archiving my work.

My working studio is a 15-minute drive down a beautiful country road, which prepares me for work that day. Glimpses of morning light hitting wild yellow irises near an abandoned pond, and a breathtaking view of the Sierra Buttes provide moments of quiet reflection before a workday begins. To insure that



my working space retains a sense of solitude, I never bring business into the studio—no paperwork, no computers, no Internet connection, no bills to be paid.

My studio is a 750-square-foot building with skylights, a utility sink, work counters and storage shelves, and one huge 20- by 15-foot wall covered with plastic and several paintings in progress. A rolling steel kitchen cart is my working table, carrying my brushes and paints of choice for the day, while an 8-foot folding table is at my side

for collage work. Making everything as accessible as possible, I reconfigure the space from time to time to fit my mood. About 20 feet from my working wall are two comfortable chairs where I can sit and view my work from a distance. I find that if I don't make time for reflection, my work suffers.

My Materials

Though trained in oils, I have used acrylic paints for more than 40 years, being too impatient for the drying time of oils and loving the versatility of acrylics. I have a multitude of brushes, but always resort to my favorites, a

3" and 4" flat synthetic-bristle brush. I also play with another favorite from time to time—a huge Chinese round brush.

With color as a priority, I play with pigments I have used before as well as using entirely new ones, always mixing for the ultimate mood of a painting. Good use of color can make or break a painting, and I am constantly fine-tuning my awareness of color. (I actually love color so much that, instead of counting sheep on a sleepless night, I dream about color!)



My collage work results not only from a love of texture, but also from being a pack rat. I save everything, my greatest fascination being plant materials. I make my own collage materials with papers, and also use found and repurposed objects such as orange bags, grocery sacks, cheesecloth, cardboard scraps, antique calendars and old dictionaries, and make prints using rubber stamps and antique wooden type.

My Process

My preparation for the day begins as I enter the studio, with a first glance at the paintings in process on the wall. Up close, I brush the canvas with my hand, getting an immediate hit whether a painting is strong or needs refinement. I make a mental note, then turn on the music and putter. Puttering, or warming up, is an important part of painting. I may clean and organize, set up my palette, prepare underpaintings on new canvases or review the progress of current work. Or, I may sit down and write, making notes on current work. My warm-up is a silent meditation like watering the garden. It may seem unrelated to the work at hand, but nourishes the garden in the meantime.

I work on large canvases, with enough room to have a full extension of my arm when I paint. I feel most comfortable involving my whole body, the



Author in her working studio

movement conveying expression onto the canvas. I never use a grid to lay out a painting, nor do I do a pencil sketch first. I thoroughly imagine and feel what I want to paint, exploring color and design in my mind, then jump into the painting immediately, using my paintbrush to map out shapes and composition. Being afraid to start can be debilitating, so I don't hesitate. From there, I let my experience, and a little intuition, guide me. This is where my work begins to grow.

How do I know a painting is done? When I feel if I go any further, I may ruin it, and if I didn't go far enough, it appears unresolved. Knowing when a painting is done is as challenging as starting. You never know until you make the move.

inspiration

True inspiration is more of a visceral experience, a knowing deep inside when something moves you. Recognizing that quality and translating it onto canvas is the most exciting, yet challenging, aspect of painting.



Paintings done from memory convey the true inspiration of the subject. I use my photos as a tool: a reference for light, color, texture or form, or simply for a record of what inspired me. Then I put them away and paint.

Canyon View, 40" x 40" acrylic on canvas

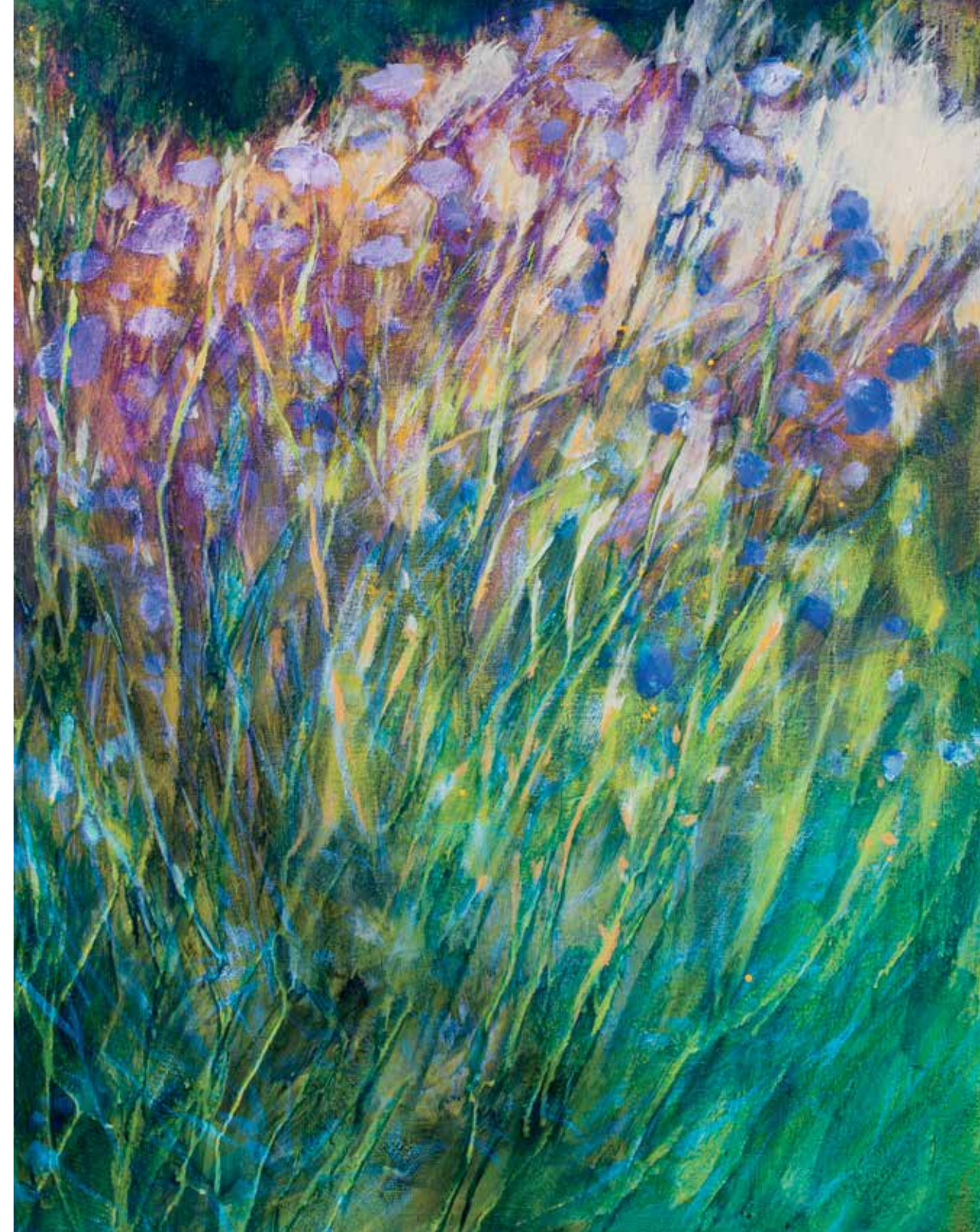




The brilliant, warm light in France is captured in my photograph above of a weathered boat. The play of horizontal lines, rough textures and saturated colors became embedded in my memory when shooting this photo. Similar elements appeared years later in my painting of a pond. Both images are enhanced by the impact of a tightly cropped design.



Water Lilies, 36" x 36" acrylic on canvas, private collection



What inspires a photograph can stay with me and later inspire a painting. The curving lines and colors of this beautiful tile floor in the Sistine Chapel in Italy reappear in the painting to the left. I am constantly reminded that sources of inspiration can come full circle.

Garden Breeze, 26" x 30" acrylic on canvas



Light, color, and repetitive lines each play an important part in images that I gravitate to. When I pay attention to capturing what resonates with me, I feel more connected to what I paint.



Field of Light, 48" x 48" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Pond Light, 36" x 48" acrylic on canvas, private collection



My eye is continually attracted to certain shapes and forms that display movement. A close-up perspective brings the viewer into the design, offering a more intimate experience of the natural world.

The Yuba River in the Sierra Nevada foothills of California is like a cathedral to me, a sacred sanctuary where rocks are magnificent sculptural forms and water takes on the brilliance of stained-glass windows. My art-filled spiritual journey to Italy soon came home to rest in the saturated colors and moods of my paintings of the Yuba.



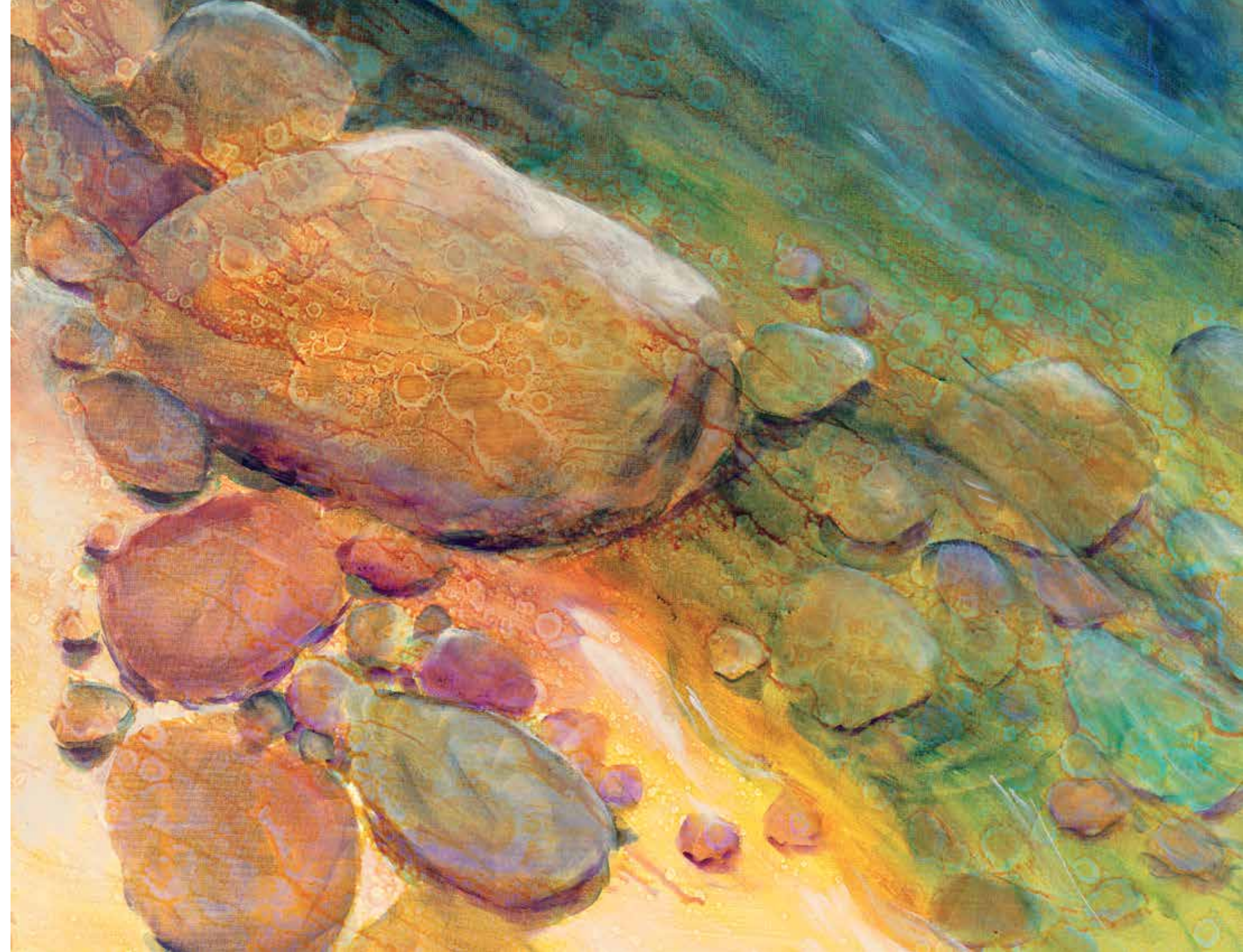
The South Fork of the Yuba River has been a deep source of inspiration for me for many years, offering quiet solitude and beauty.



The color and reverence in the light of this photo of the Sistine Chapel in Italy remind me of the Yuba.



Color inspiration of Caterpillar Phacelia and lichen on a rock on the Buttermilk Bend Trail at South Fork Yuba River.



River Light, 40" x 40" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Hirschman's Peace, 30" x 48" acrylic on canvas, private collection

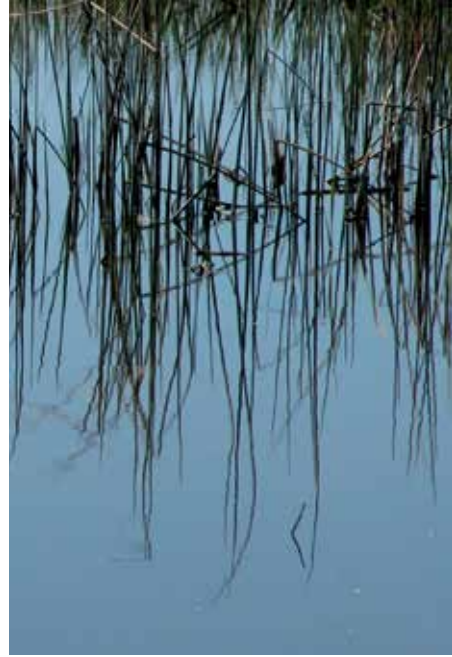


Who's to say what influences a painting? It could be the breathtaking hills of Tuscany, spilling over with color. Or it could be the glow of afternoon light in the curves of a Victorian fence. Images that stimulate my brain show up time and again in my paintings.



Weeping Birch, 24" x 36" acrylic on canvas, private collection





Noticing reflections instead of the object that is being reflected is similar to looking in the mirror. It changes your perspective and makes you notice more than is apparent.



Sky Pond, 36" x 48" acrylic on canvas



Resonance, 36" x 48" collage painting on canvas

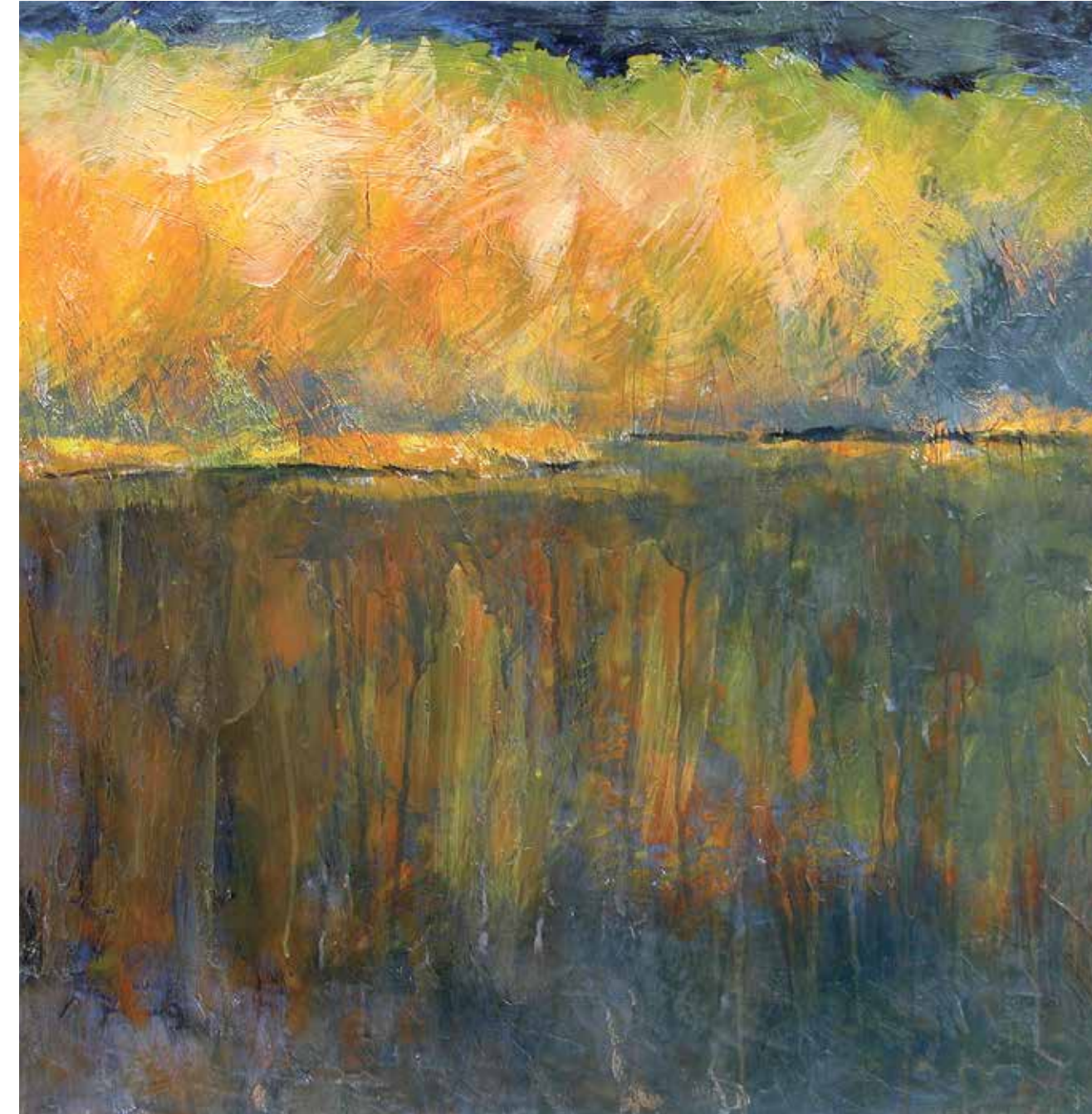


Intense oxidized greens and coppers in the intricate Victorian gate above piqued my curiosity. Looking closer, I notice purples, yellows and multiple shades of blue. This photo is creating the palette for my next painting.



Light catching the color of snow on reeds next to a pond creates a weaving of patterns that reminds me how lines and shapes can be defined. The starkness of winter brings out quiet details that otherwise may remain unnoticed.

Snow at Hirschman's Pond, 36" x 48"
acrylic on canvas, private collection



Autumn Depths, 24" x 24"
acrylic on canvas, private collection



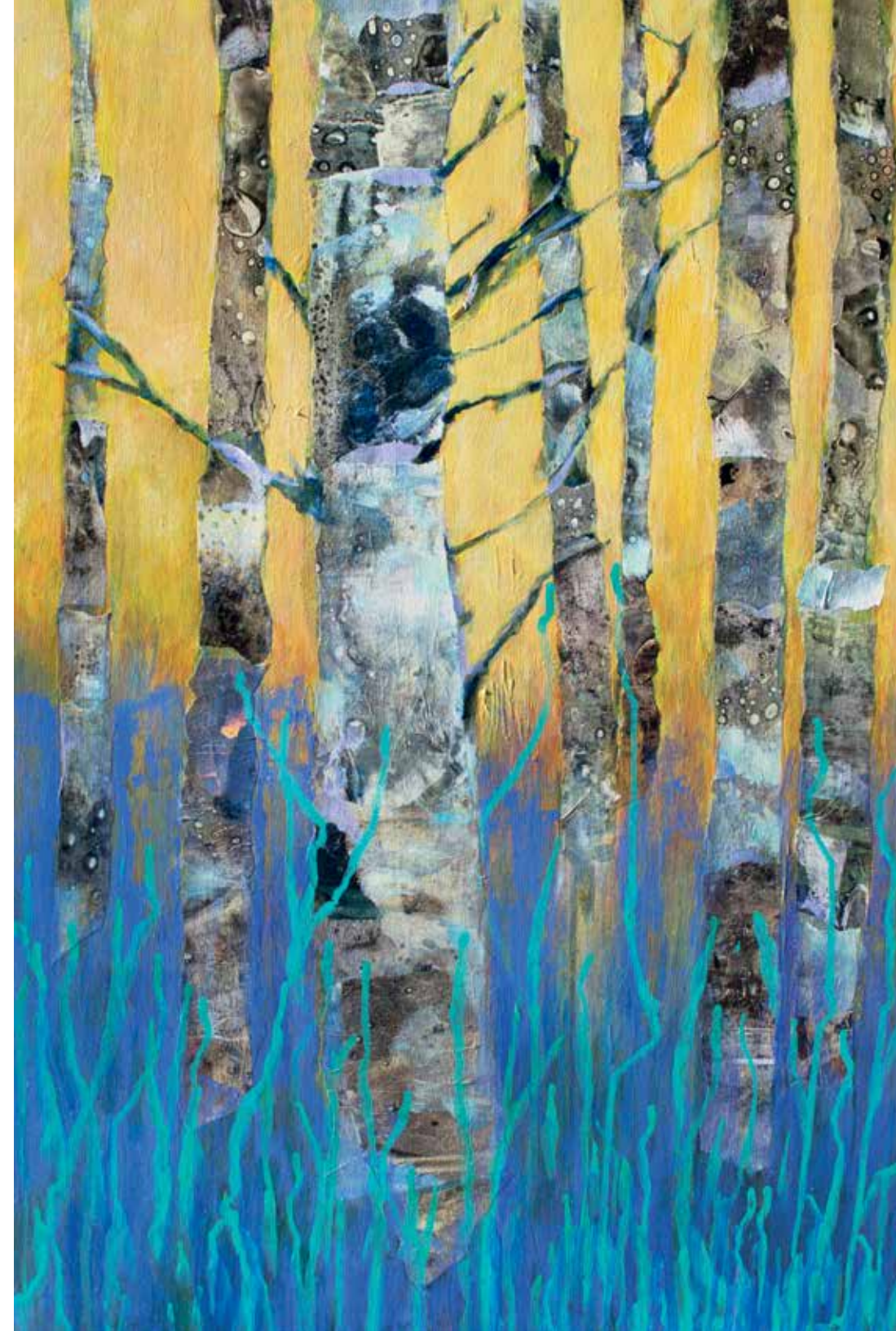
The simplicity of water and sky brings me back to long summer days as a kid, floating on a lake in a rowboat with nothing else to do but gaze at these primal elements. Like nuts stored away for the winter, these images became ingrained as part of my sustenance as an artist.



Driving by a remote pond in Oregon, I did a U-turn after these trees caught my eye. The silver-gray lichen accentuated the organic-looking lines and curves of the branches, and created a beautiful mirror image in the pond before me. It's times like this that I am glad that I turn back, and look again.



Light of Day, 36" x 36" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Aspen Turning, 24" x 36"
collage painting on canvas,
private collection

While exploring a lighthouse at the Point Reyes National Seashore in California, I walked into a workroom from the early 1900s filled with gears, knobs and old machinery, where the switch below caught my attention. The chalky blue metal, numbers, and rusted parts became a reference for color and texture in future paintings.



gardens

The garden is my muse—natural, twisted, lush and overgrown. To me, a garden resounds with energy that is unbounded, organic in form, and alive.



Sometimes a photo can tell a story about inspiration in itself. The nuances of warm and cool reds intertwining through thick foliage moved me to create a painting that had a feeling of a supple morning garden, dew dripping from newly opened blossoms.

In My Garden, 60" x 72" acrylic on canvas, private collection





I photograph dogwood blossoms frequently in the spring. Plentiful in the Sierra, their simple forms and subtle colors have a quiet elegance that invites me to look closer.



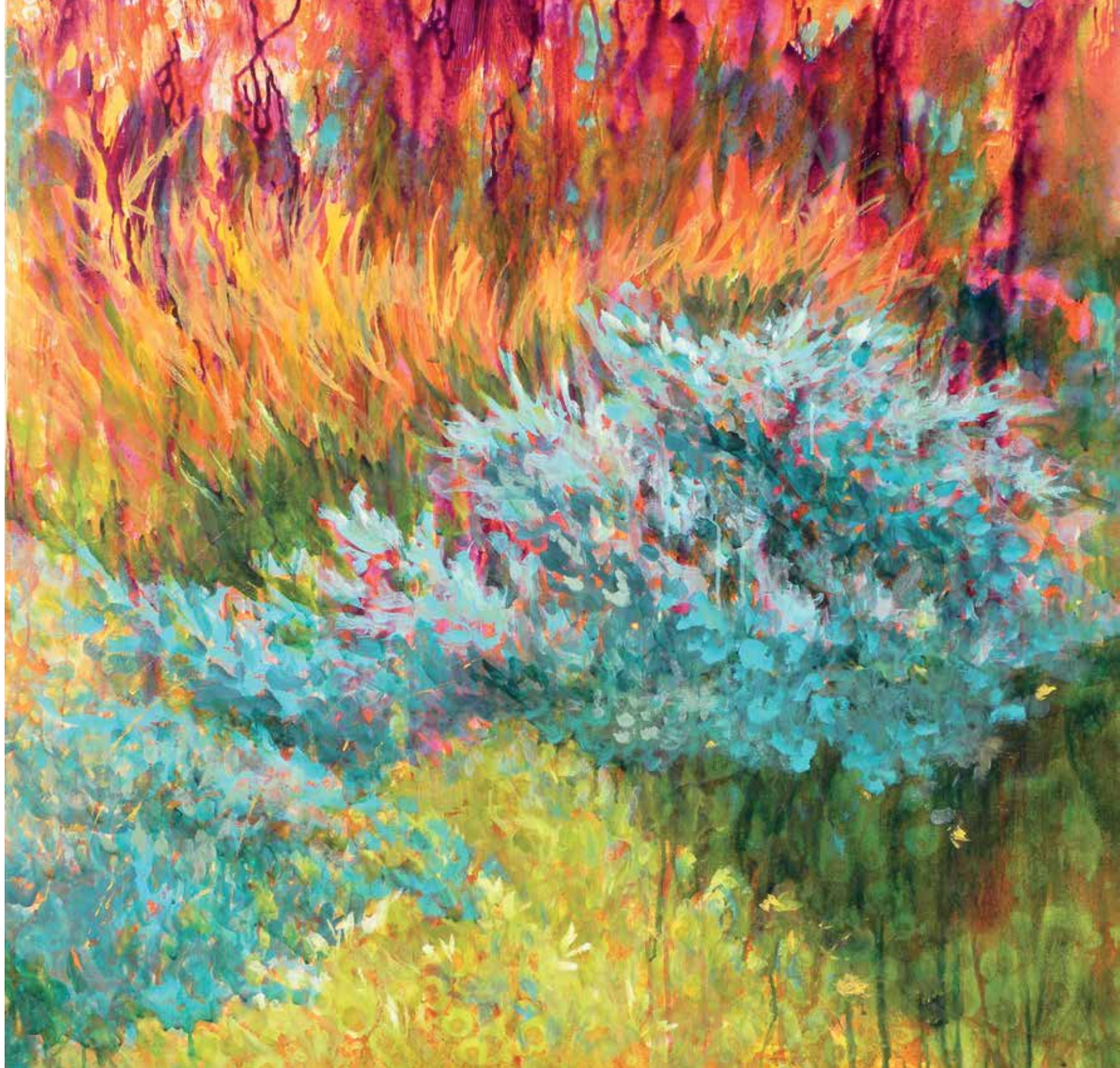
Dogwood, 12" x 12" mixed media collage painting on wood panel, private collection



My memories of lush garden colors inspired this painting of a vase of flowers. Letting spontaneity and joy come onto the canvas cultivates an entirely new garden.

Bouquet of Life,
30" x 40" acrylic on canvas, private collection

Fall Garden,
40" x 40"
acrylic on canvas,
private collection



Contrasts are most interesting to me. Whether it be contrast in colors, contrast in textures, or contrast in subject matter, the juxtaposition of opposites creates the most compelling images. The soft, sage-green ground cover growing out of the underlying pavement in the photo above stopped me in my tracks. The spiraling pattern creates movement in a way that is a painting in itself.

Matilija Poppy, 30" x 40" acrylic on paper





The tapestry of colors and textures in gardens fill my canvases on a regular basis. My neighbor maintains an incredibly beautiful garden, where I can watch the light on blossoms shift from early morning to dusk. Gardens evolve like paintings, layer upon layer of depth and richness.

Summer Garden, 40" x 40"
acrylic on canvas, private collection



What I love about nature is that nothing is stationary. Even in the stillest of settings, it is always moving, either growing in size and form, or blowing in the breeze. The lavender and grass in the windswept garden above feel like water cascading down rocks, and I remember the importance of movement when I paint.

Morning Light, 40" x 40"
acrylic on canvas, private collection



Photographed at dusk in the Bordeaux wine country region in France, the spiraling patterns of this ancient cobblestone street in Saint-Émilion fascinated me. The simple beauty of meandering lines creates depth, repetition and movement, leading the eye around the composition.



Entwined, 24" x 24" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Sometimes things appear before you in a perfect way. The striking palette of a simple blue bucket in the midst of brilliantly colored flowers at a Farmers' Market made my head turn. Years later, I was inspired to paint its memory.

Mexico Bouquet, 18" x 24" acrylic on paper, private collection



The beautiful, vertical forms from an iris garden are inspiration for brush strokes in a painting.



Iris Garden, 24" x 30" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Pond Garden, 26" x 30" acrylic on canvas



Fiery red-orange trumpet vine gathers together in a morning bouquet for my table in an iridescent blue glass vase. The tiny bubbles that attach to the sides of the vase and stem hold the most luminous light of all. Spaces of light in between stems and leaves accentuate the contrasting colors, with its essence appearing years later in the painting to the left.



A photo of tumbling red tomatoes in an open air market in France resembles the painting at the right because of the random movement of lines, shapes and colors.

Crimson Clover,
40" x 40" acrylic on canvas,
private collection



I came across this red door in the middle of a garden in Oregon, its crackled paint as beautiful as the garden itself. I wondered how many other colors the door had been before this final red coat, and how many years it took the ornate doorknob to rust to this beautiful patina. Underlying stories from simple red doors always bring fuel for future paintings.

Tortilla Soup,
24" x 24" acrylic on canvas,
private collection

water

Growing up on a lake in rural Connecticut, I have fond memories of swimming, skating, fishing and catching turtles. Not surprisingly, water was, and still is, where I find the most peace.



The subtle colors in this atmospheric photograph of a ranch resemble the spring greens and soft blues of a pond in my community of Nevada County, California to the right. Capturing a mood takes time and patience.

Hirschman's Pond, 60" x 72" acrylic on canvas, private collection

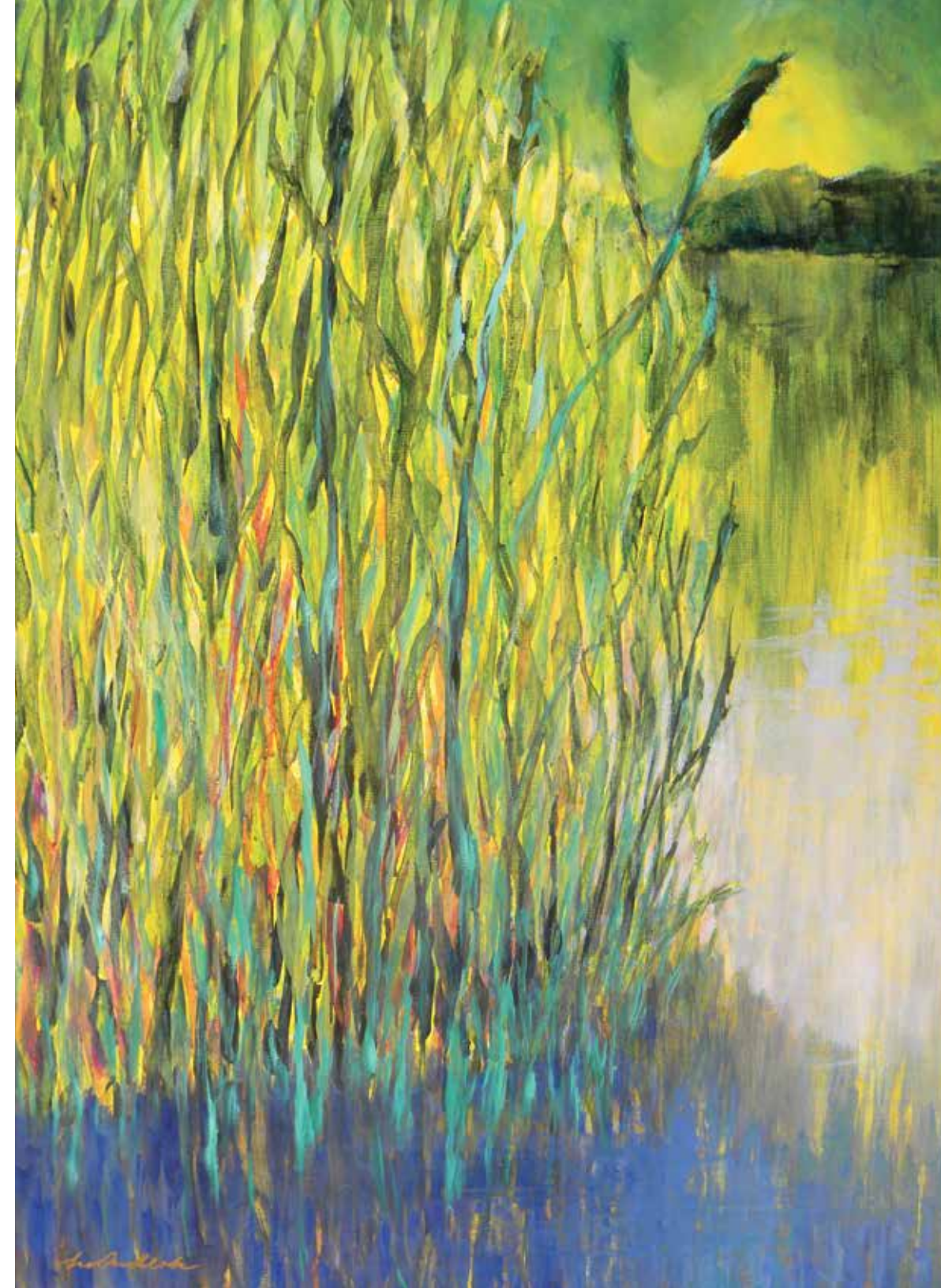




Water is captivating to me because of the variety of layers visible in its depths. The dark translucence of the approaching flow, the fall leaves clinging to a log, and the white of the rapids after it hits turbulence make me notice its many elements all from the simple photo above. All food for thought, all from a walk in the woods near my home in the Sierra Nevada foothills.



At Peace, 36" x 36" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Lines in nature have their own special rhythm. The repetition of random curves of willow branches in the photo above is perfectly balanced, spiraling up and around into an enveloping form. My paintbrush recalls that memory as the lines reappear in the patterns of vegetation at a pond's edge to the left.

Cattails, 30" x 40" acrylic on canvas, private collection



The celadon blues of the water in winter are the most beautiful of all. With buds defining individual limbs, you can hear the stillness of a day in January.



Frequent walks in nature keep my mind stimulated for studio work, yet also provide solitude for reflection. I notice the scale of my surroundings, and often feel like a speck on the earth, barely significant. The more I notice this perspective as a painter, the closer I come to knowing the natural world.

The painting to the left was inspired by the colors and patterns in these photos.

Winter Pond, 40" x 40" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Taken from an old covered bridge high above the waters of the South Yuba River, the photo above gives the viewer a perspective that leads the eye into the scene. The mirror-like reflections of fall trees in the warm afternoon light evoke a sense of tranquility.



Pool of Light, 36" x 60" acrylic on canvas, private collection



River Alchemy,
30" x 40" acrylic on canvas,
private collection



Repeated horizontal patterns of reflections glimmer in both the painting and the photo, while the colors differ dramatically. Seeing the world with paint—and imagining how I can interpret what's in front of me—brings me into an entirely new creative realm that is different from my photography.



I've always been attracted to the simplicity of the water's edge. Shot at a quiet stream in Yosemite National Park, the essence of the photo above appeared years later in my paintings of a local pond, with the water line creating a simple composition between the object and its reflection.



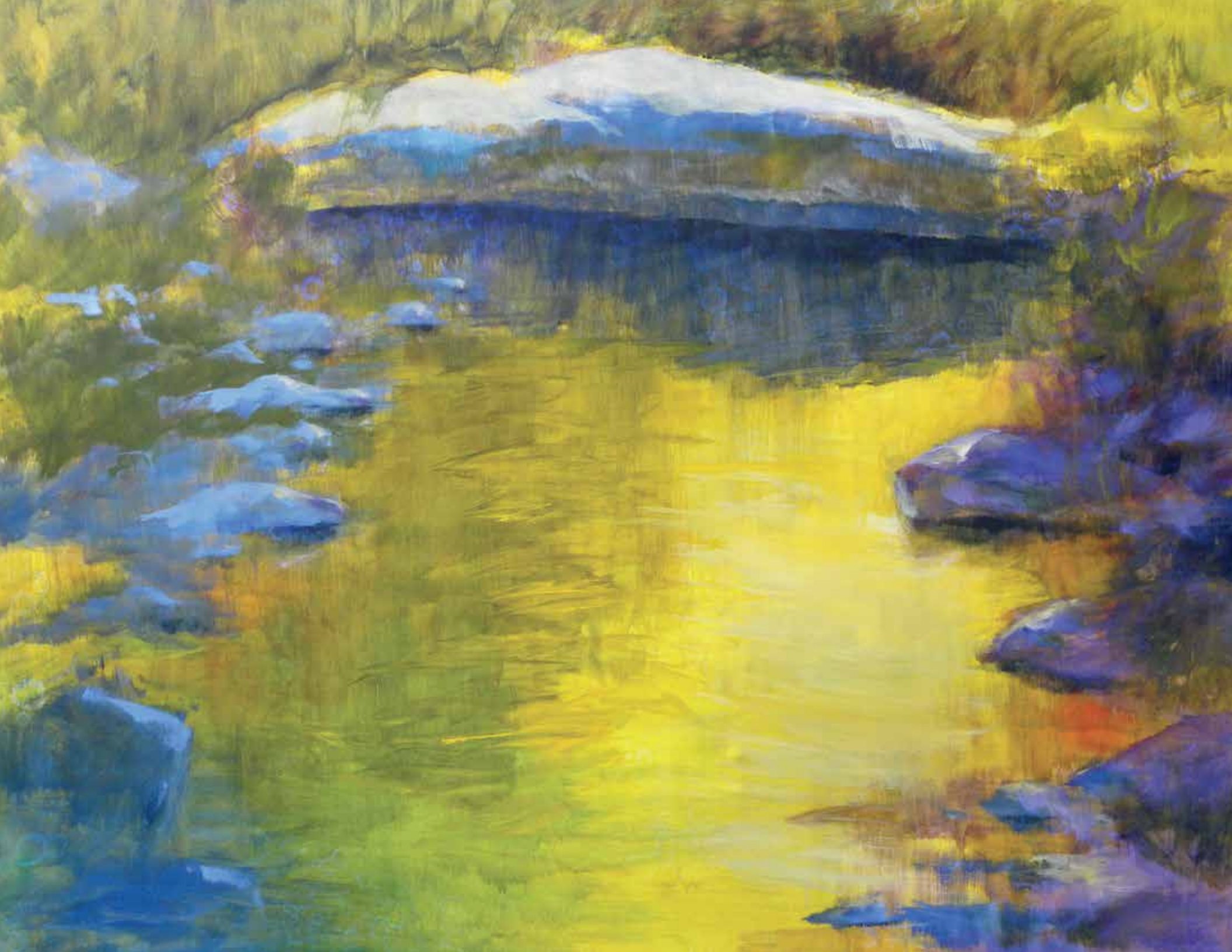
Pond Light, 48" x 48" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Inlet, 24" x 36" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Water's dimensions are a lifelong fascination for me. When I photograph water, I often realize that the scope is much broader than I ever imagined. It's about what is beneath, on and above the surface that's so captivating.



Left: **Sundown**, 60" x 72" acrylic on canvas

Above: **Sacred Yuba**, 36" x 48" acrylic on canvas, private collection



A visit to an ancient glass exhibit in the Roman Forum in Italy drew me in like a magnet. Display cases were filled with exquisite hand-blown glass of transparent blues, greens and yellows dating to the time of Caesar. As I photographed the exhibit, it brought memories of the luminosity and sacred feeling of the Yuba River in my hometown, a similar place of reflection and rejuvenation.

Yuba Pool, 18" x 24" acrylic on canvas, artist's collection



The similarities between markedly different scenes intrigue me. The warm colors at sunset and the lines and patterns in this tile rooftop in Siena, Italy echo in my painting at left. A visual memory can stimulate parallel ideas in disparate mediums.

Afternoon Light,
40" x 40" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Interlude, 26" x 90" triptych, acrylic on canvas



After many years of photographing ponds, rivers and lakes, I knew intimately the feeling I wanted to create in the painting above. Painting in a more intuitive way, I felt a deeper resonance for the subject matter.



What gives a sense of place? Reflections and floating plant material in this pond in the Sierra Nevada give an abundance of imagery to draw from. I found the reflections of the trees and sky in the water just as fascinating as the floating pine needles.

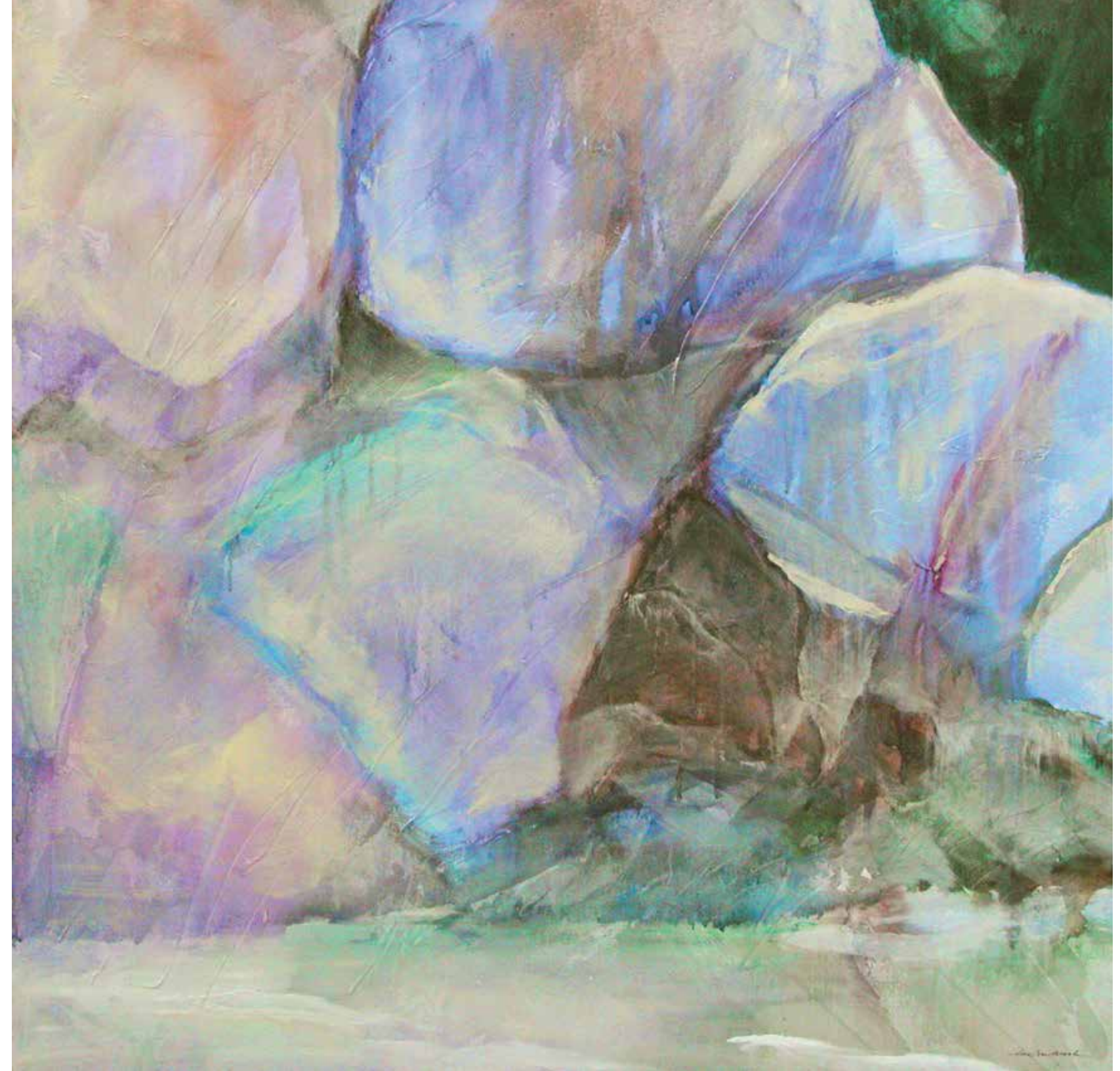
Woodland Pond, 48" x 48" acrylic on canvas

déjà vu

What comes first, the painting or the inspiration for the painting? My paintings are usually inspired by places I have been and photographs I have taken. On the other hand, I often rediscover my completed paintings in places I visit for the first time.



Photographing huge boulders in the hot sun at the Yuba River, I remember swimming up close to the rocks in a still part of the water and feeling the reflected heat. The painting to the right was created years later, entirely from the memory of those glowing rocks.



Sun Rocks,
36" x 36"
acrylic on canvas,
private collection



On a trip to Tuscany, the lush fields and cypress trees felt familiar. Upon returning home, I realized that I had painted this scene years before, entirely fabricated in my mind, without ever seeing it.



Moon Over Cypress, 24" x 24" acrylic on canvas



Provence Poppies, 30" x 36" acrylic on canvas. Private collection.

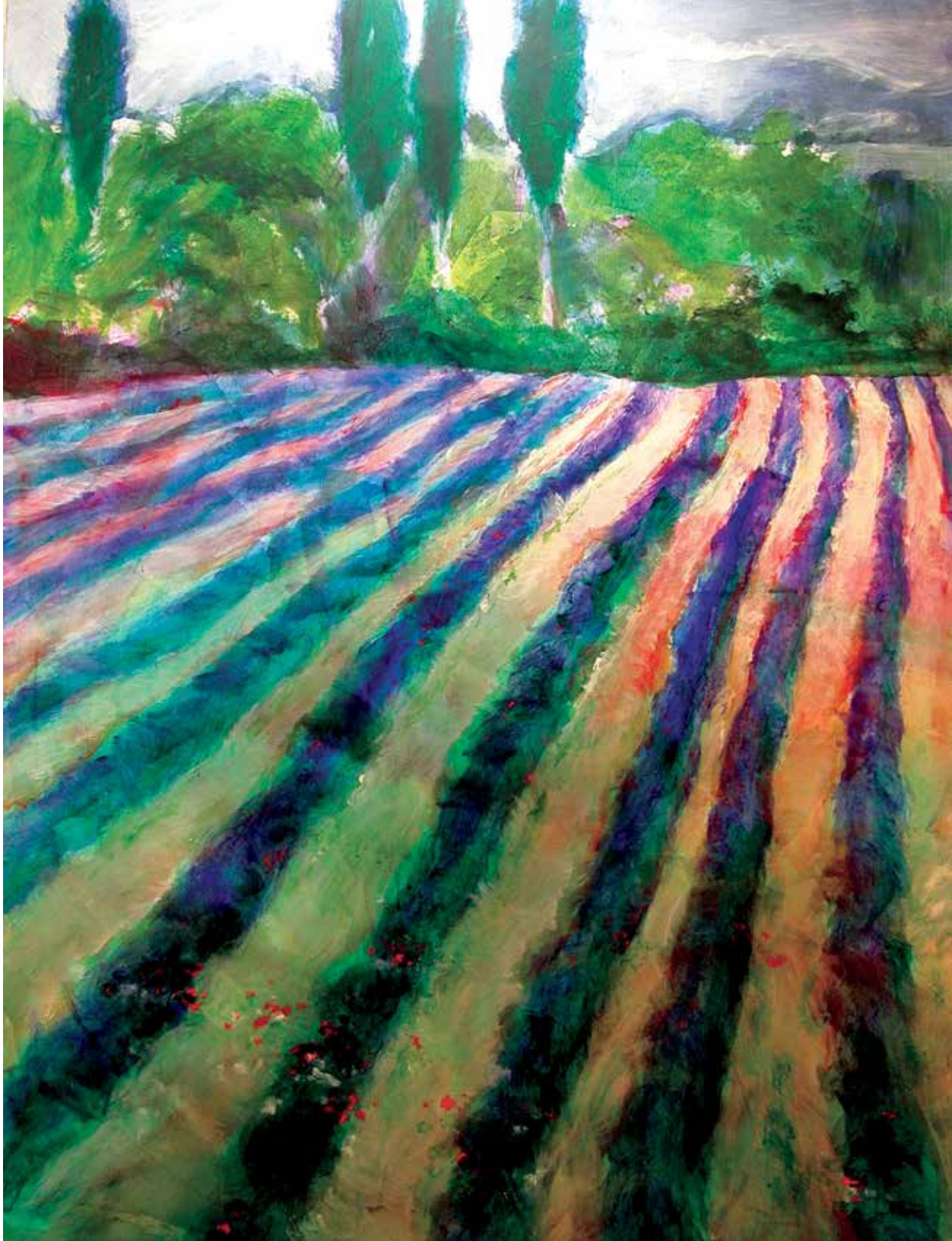


I had a feeling of déjà vu when shooting the photo above. I remembered that I had painted the landscape to the left from my imagination, after a trip to France. The image reappeared six years later as I photographed a field of poppies in Tuscany.



I am drawn to lines and interesting perspectives. The rows of lavender in the painting to the right resemble the photo above of rows of grapes in a vineyard in Tuscany. When I compose a photo, it is like composing a painting. I want the design to lead the viewer into the landscape, as if they were walking up these paths in the field.

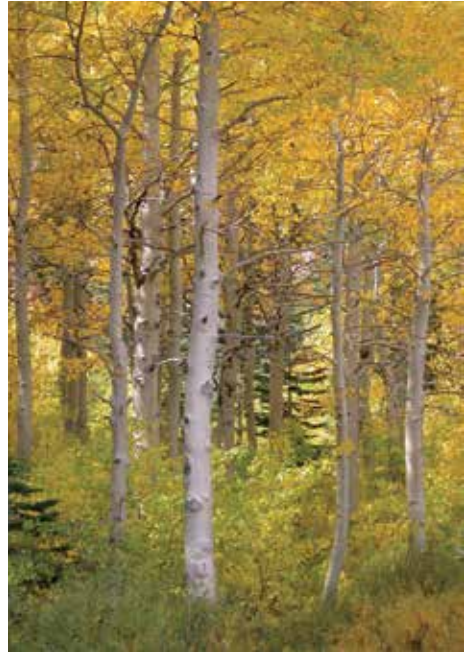
France Dream, 36" x 48" acrylic on canvas, painted after returning from a trip to France. Private collection.



Harvest Moon, 36" x 36" acrylic on canvas, private collection



The soft quality of atmosphere of this hillside of trees in the photo above in Mendocino, California resembles one of my earliest paintings, even though the photo was shot nearly ten years *after* I did the painting.



I have photographed Aspen trees in the Sierra for many years, taking note not only of the brilliant colors of their leaves, but also the unusual color and textures of the bark. The painting to the right expresses a déjà vu experience that I had recalling the aliveness of these trees.



Aspen Light, 36" x 48" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Valley Bloom,
36" x 36" acrylic on canvas,
private collection

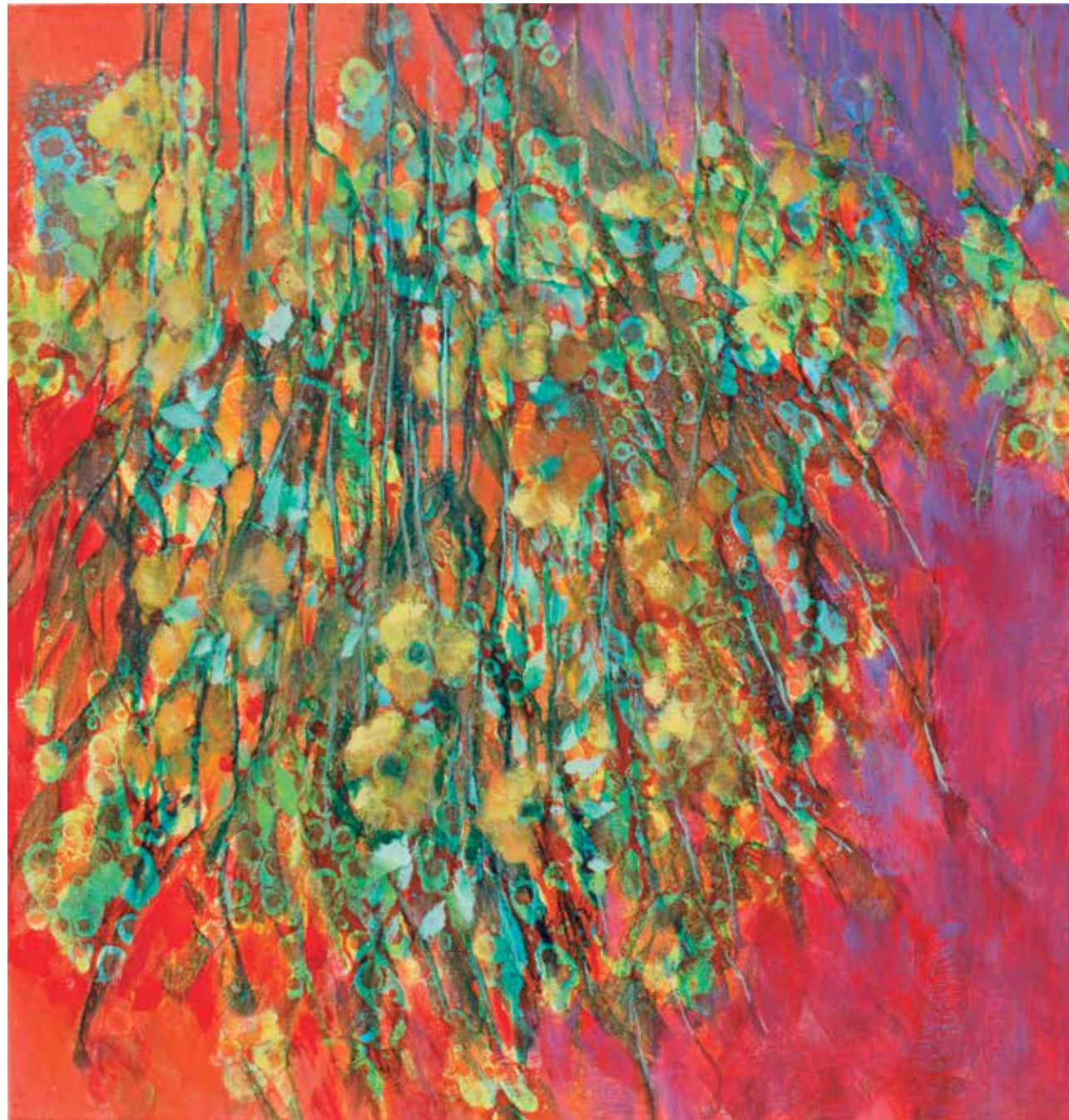


The photo of these delicate blossoms hanging from underbrush in the arid Southwest desert was shot several years after creating the painting to the left. Inspiration goes full circle.

Unbridled,
30" x 30"
acrylic on canvas



As I knelt down to photograph these flowers suspended from a rock in Arches National Park, I had a strange feeling of being there before. It then dawned on me that I had already done the painting to the right many months prior to ever seeing this scene in person. Certain colors, textures and forms are essentially a part of me.



Forest Light, 40" x 90" triptych, acrylic on canvas



Being in the midst of a grove of Aspen trees is like being among family to me. When translating the image of these trees to the canvas, I am reminded of playing in the woods as a child.



Shoreline, 30" x 36" acrylic on canvas, private collection

I love wandering in the expanse of the Sierra Nevada. The natural world is full of paintings that already exist, perfect in their own right. When I return to paint in the studio, I remember not only the color of light and movement of vegetation, but also the smells in the mountain air. The entire experience then becomes the painting, with its recall becoming a "knowing" of this environment.



Ethereal, 36" x 60" acrylic on canvas, private collection



Fall Light, 24" x 30" acrylic on canvas, private collection



I have always loved thickets of undergrowth, curving branches and the richness of the colors in the fall. The photo above of lavender caught my eye in Tuscany. It resembles both an earlier painting I did to the left of Martis Valley in the Sierra Nevada and also mirrors a 100-year-old oak tree in my friend's backyard.



*Oak Sunset,
48" x 48"
acrylic on canvas,
private collection*

vision quest

A photo translated into abstract form in paint invites the viewer to take a second look. As an artist, this interpretation invited me to go deeper, transforming my work to another level.



My interest in this photo was more about the reflections in the water than the trees themselves, prompting an interpretation with collage materials that gave a sense of what is beneath the surface.

Water Stories, 56" x 67" collage painting on canvas





I wondered how my experience in Tuscany would influence my work, yet upon returning I didn't paint for a month. Allowing the experience to really sink in, I applied my memories of brilliant color and flowing forms to a new way of seeing, resulting in a series of landscape-based abstract collage paintings.



Tuscany Light, 10" x 10" collage painting on wood panel, private collection



My photos are often used as a reference for shape or form when painting, allowing my interpretation of the mood to be expressed in a different way in color and textures. The photo to the right provided the shape of a lily pad, yet the colors in the painting above came from my memory of the look of the golden glow on water at dusk.



Floating, 26" x 60" diptych, collage painting on canvas, private collection



Serendipity, 24" x 30" collage painting on wood panel, private collection



Interpreting the brilliant canyons and landscape of the Southwest into an abstract form provided unlimited resources for exploration of a new series of collage paintings. The rough terrain and saturated colors pushed me into new artistic territory. I felt timid, yet also released, when I started on these paintings, unsure of the outcome. It's the uncertainty in painting that excites me most.



Convergence, 36" x 60" collage painting on canvas, private collection



My photography played a key part in preserving the memory of this spectacular landscape. Exploring the canyons and plateaus expanded my vision as a painter.

Confluence, 48" x 60" collage painting on canvas, private collection



The nuances of color and texture in rocks become a springboard for new paintings. Mimicking the convergence of boulders and rush of water in the abstract was a natural way to convert it to my own vision.



Yuba Abstract, 20" x 20" collage painting on wood panel



Transcending, 30" x 60" diptych, acrylic on wood panels

I shot this photograph to capture the brilliant turquoise of the Pacific Ocean and the expansive landscape of the Mendocino Headlands in California. The colors and the crevices of contrasting textures became a great resource for my paintings.





Adrift, 40" x 54" collage painting on canvas

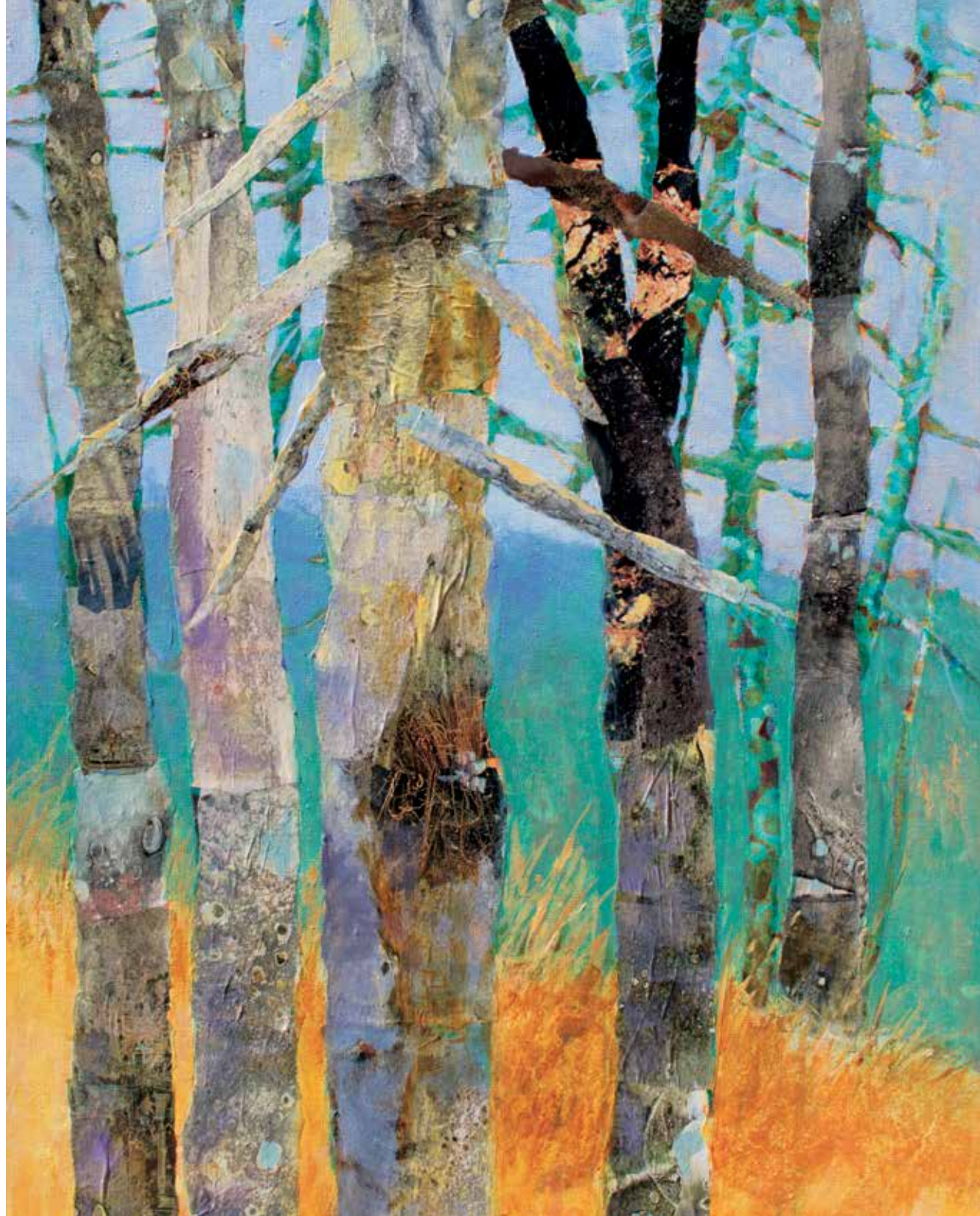


Flow, 24" x 48" collage painting on canvas



On a hike in the Sierra, I came across this hollow tree, glowing with the colorful movement of centuries of woodgrain patterns. In full circle, I bring the resource of a tree into reused papers for my collage paintings that are in turn, paintings of trees.

Canyon Edge, 24" x 36"
collage painting on canvas



Canyon Suite, 30" x 30"
collage painting on wood panel



The sculptural quality of the plateaus and canyons of the Southwest inspired similar aspects to my painting, motivating the eye to move in and out of cool hollows onto sun-drenched tables of packed red soil.



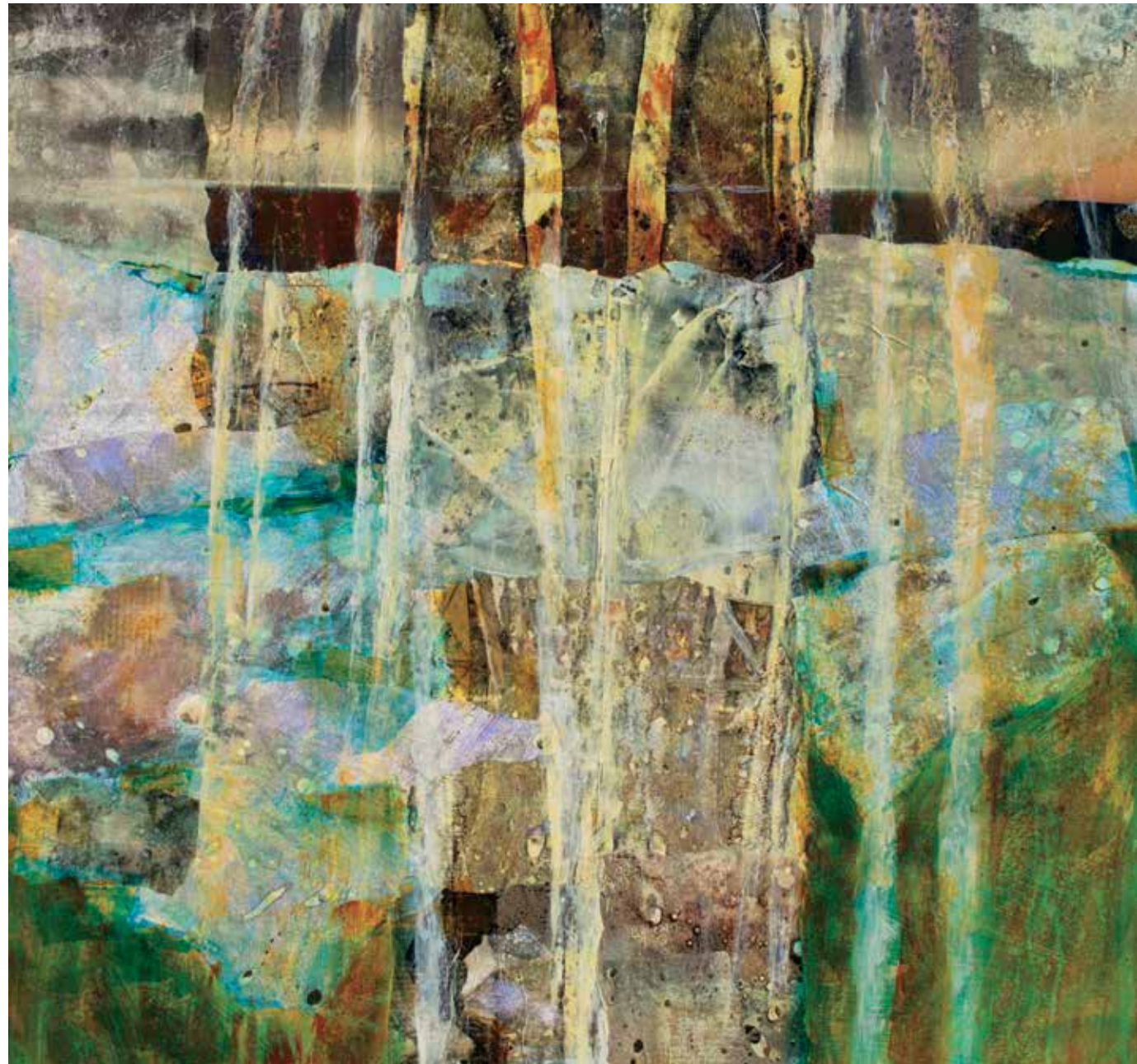
Changing from a soft green in the spring to a chalky white in the fall, this Aspen tree was photographed in early summer. When it came time to interpret this unusual tree, I wanted the painting to feel "otherworldly." Subtle shades of celadon, siennas and delicate textures of the bark appear years later in this collage painting to the right.

Inner Sanctum, 48" x 48"
collage painting on canvas,
private collection

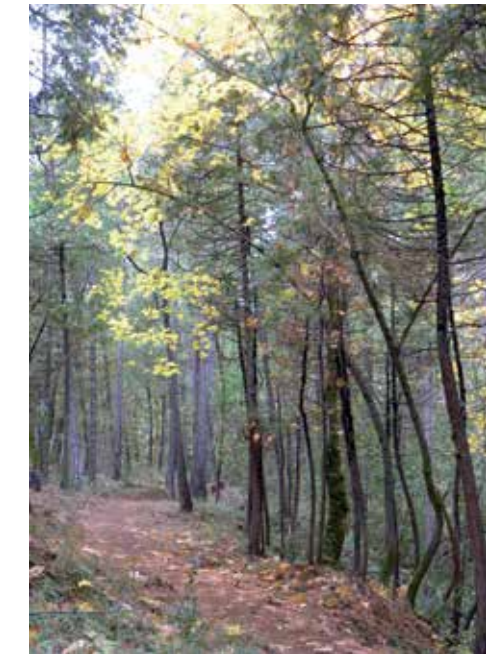
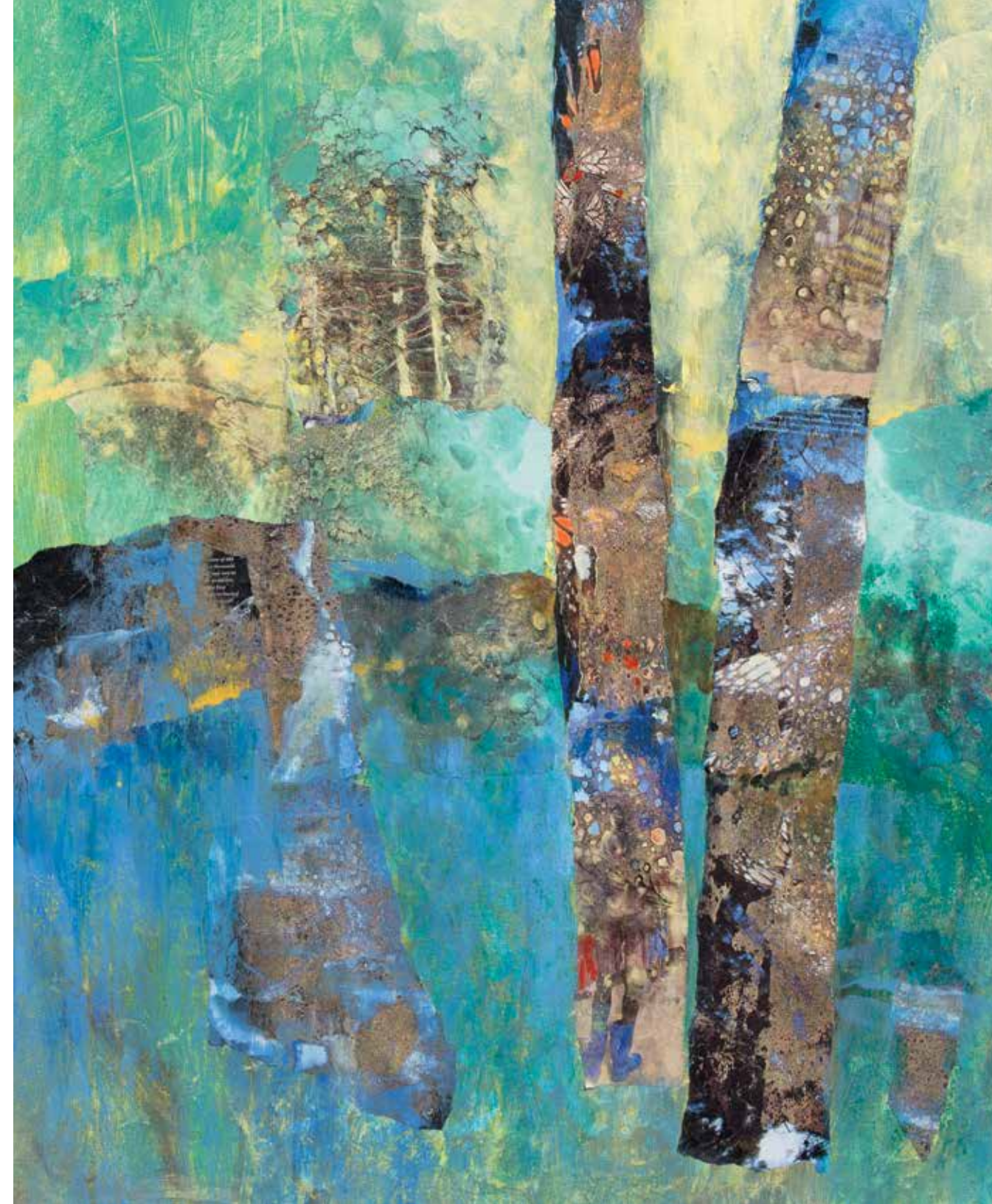


The mosaic-like rock patterns reflected in the still water above make this one of my favorite photos. Shot on the banks of the Yuba River, it was a perfect subject to convey in a more abstract form. From my memory of this setting, jagged rocks were formed with collage papers, then integrated into the painting, leaving a feeling of the power—yet stillness—of this spectacular environment.

Still Waters, 36" x 48"
collage painting on canvas,
private collection



Emerald Harbor, 30" x 30" collage painting on wood panel, private collection



A dream of misty forests, light coming through hillside groves, and hidden dancing Monarch butterflies became a reality in the painting to the left. My photos over the years fueled my imagination with vivid imagery. In turn, my paintings fuel the next photo, motivating me to turn them inside out and upside down, in a way that I've never seen before.

Vision Quest, 26" x 30" collage painting on canvas



Yuba Rocks Study

14" x 11" watercolor crayon on paper, private collection

afterword

Aspen trees are among the oldest living things on earth, and one of my favorite subjects to paint and photograph. There is a term that I read about in an article by naturalist David Lukas called "theoretical immortality." In leading a group of writers through a grove of Aspen trees in at the Squaw Valley Writers Conference in the Sierra Nevada, he explained how Aspen trees are essentially clones. From the root system that feeds the tree, new trees spring up and in turn spread out more roots, in a potentially immortal cycle. They continue their circle of life, bringing back their flickering golden leaves in the fall and celadon-green bark in the spring in groves of magnificent wonder. Such grace to have the ability to stay on this earth a little longer, offering a little more beauty.

After nearly 40 years in the business of graphic design, I realized that I was in a throwaway profession. Under many arduous deadlines, I would design and deliver brochures with compelling copywriting, stunning photography and flawless printing only to have them tossed out the next day after quick perusal by a reader. Only with one type of product, in that capacity, did I design anything that would remain, to be passed down and enjoyed for years to come. Those products were books.

And so the story begins. From picking up a paintbrush at six years old, to learning photography at fifteen, becoming a painter at age twenty, doing graphic design for forty years, back to being a painter, I suddenly felt compelled to write and design a book. I began by describing my sources of inspiration, selecting my favorite images, showing the relationship between a camera and a paintbrush. But a bigger message started to surface. It was a feeling of a cycle, a continuous loop of one source feeding off another, from a painting to a photo to a painting, creating a circle of inspiration. Kind of like theoretical immortality.

Inspiration doesn't have a beginning and an end. It doesn't start with a photo, and end with a painting. It can start with a sketch and lead to a sculpture ... or even a book. Inspiration is a continuous loop like Aspen trees popping up through the mountains, one source feeding another, creating beauty in perpetuity.

—LeeAnn Brook, August 2014

acknowledgements

My expression of gratitude comprises many levels, as so many people have played a part in my life in art and the making of this book.

Support from my family has been key to nearly all aspects of my artistic growth. To my mother, who raised me as a single parent without an artistic bone in her body, yet with the love and encouragement to move mountains, and who imparted the strength of a true New Englander; to my father, with his artistic genes and unspoken words that were passed down to me in a perfect way; to my second family, Ron and Pat Bourbeau, who provided my safety net as an adolescent in a challenging environment; to my earliest mentor in art, Dennis Hrusa, who introduced a shy 12-year-old in a rural community to the bigger world of Michelangelo, van Gogh and Monet; and to Jim Grabowski, who lit a fire under me at 20 by exposing me to the contemporary art scene in New York, encouraging me to launch my own art career.

To my daughters, Lindsay and Kelsey Kenna, whose love, honesty and candor shake up my world, in a good way; to my life partner Robert Stelson, who not only provides unwavering love and support, but also offered feedback on my art and incredible assistance on this book, bringing an artistic eye and design sense that could only come from a seasoned professional. And from someone who loves me.

To Lowell Robertson, my longtime client, mentor, supporter and friend who has taught me that hard work and tenacity can pay off; to Jim Bair, who puts meaning into the thought "someone believes in me."

To Molly Fisk, whose foreword and general coaching on the content of the book came with grace, finesse and inherent honesty; to my dear friends Martha Meredith and Rebecca Coffman, whose aesthetic sensibility and sensitivity to the written word helped fine-tune this book, bring it into reality, and give me confidence that it was a good thing; to David Lukas for his expertise in the natural world; to Greg Archbald for his unabashed enthusiasm and desire for the book to be a success; to Caleb Dardick of the South Yuba Citizens League for acknowledging the important alignment of art and preservation; to George and Suzanne Olive for their early insight into the writing of the book; and to Kit Bailey, the Renaissance man who not only applies his impeccable editing and proofreading skills to produce a professional piece, but also brings an awareness of art and music, making our working relationship even more meaningful.

Finally, thanks to my incredible community of art supporters: John Cullen, my biggest collector, fan, friend and one who knows how to pick a winner; to Al Zimmerman, whose eons of aesthetic guidance and dry humor are breaths of fresh air; to Robin Wallace who never tires of the conversation around art; to my mentor Chris Hayman, an incredible abstract painter with a heart of gold; and finally to my many collectors, who believe my paintings grace their beautiful homes and have encouraged the evolution of my art, while realizing that I also needed to make a living.

about the author



PHOTO: LINDSAY KENNA

LEEANN BROOK's career in art has been life-long. She has been a painter since kindergarten, a photographer since high school, a contemporary fine artist since college and a graphic designer in her own business since 1976.

Brook majored in fine art and graphic design at a small art school on the East coast, and migrated from Connecticut to Boston to California working as an art director in ad agencies, and later started her own design studio in the Sierra foothills arts community of Nevada City, California. She is passionate about her community and her art, and believes that creating awareness of our natural world through the form of art not only helps connect us in a deeper way, but also opens our eyes, inspiring action for preservation.

about the book

Thank you for taking the time to read ***Points of Inspiration***. If you enjoyed the journey, your feedback is welcome and encouraged.

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“LeeAnn Brook takes us on a tour of her work, showing what was influential, even decades before a painting’s beginning, and what her finished pieces have in turn influenced. It’s a lovely introduction to her aesthetic and a fascinating look into one artist’s process. The perennial question we ask of most creative people, if only in our minds, is: “How did you even think of that?”

This elegant book is devoted to answering that question.”

—from the Foreword by Molly Fisk, author of *Blow-Drying a Chicken* and *The More Difficult Beauty*

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