

# Marlene Lewis



*From left to right: Fire and Ice, Color Me Passion and sublime*



Painting, to me, is a search. When I first started painting twenty-something years ago, I tried an experiment with color by painting in a dark room, lit only by candlelight. This experience was probably the most important art lesson I ever had— It taught me to “feel” the intensity of warm and cool colors. And it also taught me to paint what I love. This is harder than it seems. This has been a life-long lesson for me and is probably the reason why I paint. To get in front of an empty canvas and to find that passion— to find what I love and what drives me. It is truly a discovery.

I grew up in Miami, Florida. When I think of my childhood, I think of tropical breezes and blue-green skies—the hustle and bustle of a melting pot— Little Havana, the lingering smell of espresso and cigars, exotic women with glittery red heels and flowing dresses. And, when I look at my paintings I see the colors of my childhood— a virtual rainbow of unconscious feelings. I have come to see that my painting style is like my handwriting. I can’t really change it. So, I do what comes naturally. For me, I paint completely by

emotion. I search for what captures my imagination and then let that take me somewhere else. I look at Gauguin, Lautrec, Matisse, Van Gogh— Each artist took their knowledge of form and color and made it into something entirely unique— and, entirely their own. This is what I strive to do in my painting. Ephemeral and real. It’s such a fine balance. It’s an amazing process.

I started taking painting classes in my early twenties. I loved drawing. It was so expressive. We drew from live models and we painted the masters— using graphs to make sure that every stroke was exactly the way it had been originally drawn and painted. But, at some point in this process, I realized that I needed to paint on my own, away from classes and other people’s points of views. The way I paint is also the way I live my life. I need to go through the stages I need to go through in order to make my life meaningful. It takes an extreme independence of thought. It’s very tempting to try to do things the way other people do them, but, in the end, it’s only when I find my own path that I make my own discoveries. Then I find a new place to be, one that feels right

for that time. Everything I paint, whether a portrait, an interior, a plein air landscape, a nude, an abstract or collage, is an expression of an interior dialogue, a feeling or emotion that drives me to a new place.

Whenever I can, I paint from life— flowers, buildings, people, landscapes. Life stirs my senses. I often paint inanimate objects imbued with living energy. After all, it's part of our universe. Being alive and being aware of it, is so special. If I can capture that in my paintings, then I've accomplished a great deal— but I always go back to painting the figure. Most days I paint using a model. Growing up with three sisters, and of course, being a woman myself, I've always been fascinated by the female psyche— So in this way, I share a common bond with classical painters who used women as their painting subjects. One difference, though, is that instead of putting a mythological or religious interpretation on it, I project my own feeling of being a woman, in this time and place, onto the canvas. To capture the enigmatic quality “woman”, whether figuratively or abstractly, that, for me, is the ultimate challenge.

Painting requires constant decisions and changes. Sometimes, you have to give up most what you love about a painting to make it work. Ultimately though, the colors I end up with are based on unconscious feelings— Skin becomes purple, or yellow or green, —whatever feels right for the painting. And, then there's the matter of design. Sometimes, an abstract shape works, plain and simple, no fuss, just a mass of color. Other times, a more literal stroke is needed. Lately, I've been experimenting with beautiful papers and drippy metallic paints. It throws in a new element and it's a great way to shake things up, to help me see things in a new way and to take things in a new direction. And that's what it's all about. Not being complacent. Finding out new ways to share what I feel about the world.

*Marlene Lewis will be painting with Henryk Ptasiewicz on a collaborative painting at the St. Louis Art Fair in Clayton, Saturday, September 6th, 3:00-5:00 p.m. at the Art St. Louis Booth. She will also be showing her work, along with fellow artists Henryk Ptasiewicz and Mary Bearman at their upcoming show, “Painting with Passion”, on September 20th.*

Recent juried shows include: *Studio Altius Gallery, Art & Air, in Webster Groves, Belas Artes Floral Paint-Out in Lafayette Square, Venus Envy, Women's Caucus Art, St. Louis Chapter, The St. Louis Artist Guild, The World Trade Center St. Louis, Fleishman-Hillard.*

Work shown locally at: *Grafica Fine Art Gallery, 314.961.4020, Cyrano's Café and Wine Bar, 314.963.3232, Belas Artes, 314.772.2787 and Arch Framing & Design, Inc. (Collaborative work with Henryk Ptasiewicz) 314.645.6621.*

*Marlene Lewis lives in Webster Groves in an old Victorian house (which provides much inspiration for her painting) with her husband, Larry. She can be contacted at email; [leftysue52@aol.com](mailto:leftysue52@aol.com) or (314) 961-0590. Visit her website [www.marlenelewis.com](http://www.marlenelewis.com) for more details.*



*Venetian Flowers*



*Notes Of A Woman*