



THE Circle of Gifts

Writer Donna Kublin

Nature provides us with magnificent gifts: majestic scenery that is wide, deep and stunning; close-up details only revealed by slanted sunlight; cloud formations full of mystery. Perhaps it's a colorful flower petal singular in its vibrancy, a slender branch twisting just so or a leaf exquisite in its shape. Such glimpses appear and disappear in the blink of an eye, but for a split second, time stands still, breathing stops, the beauty and spirit of life intensifies and we feel awe.

So it is with the artwork of award-winning oil painter Lucy Dickens. Her realism is not about reproducing a scene, but rather capturing magical moments. In this regard, she has a gift. She is able to reveal spirit and enable viewers to be part of the experience as she makes a special connection with her subject matter and honors its essence — and people respond.

"When I look at Lucy's paintings, I'm inspired," says Bob Reitdorf, an art collector. "From an artistic viewpoint, they are phenomenal. But it is not the artistic value that draws my attention; it is how they make me feel."

Dickens is also a fine art storyteller.

"I'm drawn to scenes that take my breath away," she explains. "It's those moments of beauty that cause me to feel, to reflect and to give thanks. A scene that has a power, placidity and intensity that draws me in, I strive to

capture. There is a story in these segments of time and therefore, a story in each painting."

She creates narrative scenes of her travels as well as of Arizona in both paint and words, as she aims to take people along on the journey with her. Her approach evolved from keeping a travel journal, which, along with her photographs, enabled her to reconnect with her feelings at the moment she was there. She uses the journal to create the narrative in words for each painting.

"Knowing the story behind the creative process makes a piece even more memorable and special," say Don and Linda Kesner, who are also collectors. "Each artist's view of the world is unique and it isn't often that collectors get to know the inspiration and insight behind each piece."

Dickens did not start out to be an oil painter. At age 19, she married her high school sweetheart, Richard, and they began a family and birthed a business. She worked full time and while she dabbled in sketching, had a full and busy life with no time for creative outlets.

About 10 years ago, while her daughters were in high school and her business commitments lessened, she was able to focus on her interest in art. It all started with her desire to try and create a mural for her new home. Her husband brought home sheetrock and she began painting.



**"The meaning of life is to find your gift.
The purpose of life is to give it away." - Pablo Picasso**



Once she put brush to canvas, she knew this was what she was supposed to do. She stepped out of the family business to concentrate on her art full time and be with her daughters.

Dickens worked to “be the sponge” in any way she could learn, including attending workshops at the Scottsdale Artists’ School and other venues; reading books and viewing videos; working with artists she admired; studying great works of art; going to museums and galleries; and so on.

“I would consider my education self-directed study, with countless hours in the studio and outdoors exploring, pushing the envelope and trying new things,” she says. “I switched to oil about seven years ago and never looked back. I love it and know there is still so much more to learn. I think we never stop growing, or never should.”

Her faith has had a profound effect on her life and her work. It guided her to find her calling, to successfully navigate the life changes it required and to find her voice. She discovered that she had a talent for seeing, capturing and painting magical moments. Many of the scenes in Arizona came from where she and her husband hiked, biked off-road and camped. As she traveled, she also found scenes that she wanted to share. She is currently working on her Spain series and also has series from trips to Turkey, Greece, Italy, and the eastern United States.

She creates her paintings at her spacious, well-appointed studio, a would-be game room that to her surprise, her husband converted to a studio while they were on a recreational vehicle trip. The ultimate “while you were out” project, coordinated by her husband and mother, became an important step in taking her work to the next level.

Dickens wants to share her art and sees it as part of her life’s purpose.

“I believe that when I create an original, it is for one special person,” she says. “I don’t know who that person is, but they make a connection to my painting and it warms my heart when that happens. But beyond that, I want to reach others who are really moved by my art and my story. I feel strongly that I must, in some quality way, make my art available beyond those who can purchase an original. That is why I offer prints and gift items.”

She also believes that brushstrokes are the footprints of an artist’s emotions. In this regard, her steps are made with clear intention, each full of conscious choice and action, and the effect of her art is visceral.

“Lucy’s work brings beauty into our homes,” says Colette Kallock, an avid collector. “They bring a sense of peace when we look at them and make us feel good.”

Dickens’ painting “Joyful” was selected to appear on the directory cover of the Sonoran Arts League’s 2015 Hidden in the Hills Studio Tour being held November 20-22 and 27-29. During the tour, she will be at Quail Run Studio, Studio 32, located at 8679 E. Preserve Way in Scottsdale.

“Joyful” captures the beauty of a prickly pear cactus that to the surprise of many, actually blooms red. Dickens explains how the painting got its title, which is taken from her story that accompanies it: “Upon completing the painting, I wasn’t sure what to title it, then decided on how I felt while painting. There are times when painting everything seems to fall in line, joy fills my heart and continues to expand. I feel like I am painting in the spirit and everything else just washes away but the painting evolving before me. It is such an incredible feeling and one so hard to describe. This is why I paint, what draws me so and the drive and desire to share these moments. It doesn’t happen all the time, yet I am thankful when it does and hope for this more often as I progress as a painter and storyteller.”

She and her husband have broken ground for a new home in Carefree, which she hopes at a future point will be one of the studios on the tour.

Her work can be seen by appointment at her studio/gallery in Glendale, at Xanadu Gallery online and at a juried group show at Desert Foothills Library in Cave Creek until October 3.

In addition, she will have two coastal paintings in the Arizona Art Alliance Juried Exhibit at the Holland Gallery of Fine Art from September 26 through October 29, with a reception on October 10 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. She will also have a holiday open studio and gallery on December 12 at her gallery in Glendale.

lucydickensfineart.com