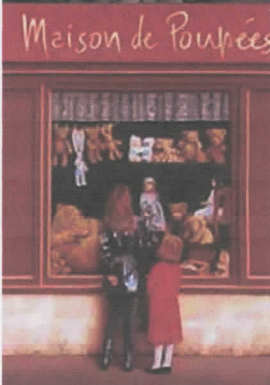
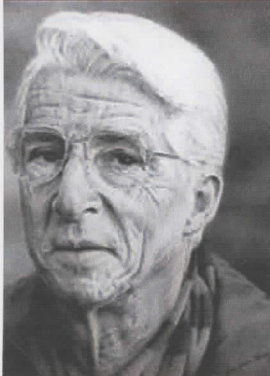
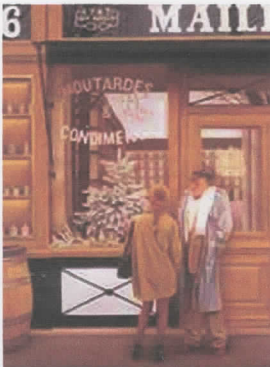


Ann James Massey

By Myrna Zanetell



An enticing blend of sophistication and innocence, ageless symbolism and modern spontaneity, the art of Ann James Massey serves as a window into the heart and soul of the artist herself. Ann relates, "At a very early age, I found myself drawn to the Old Masters, especially Johannes Vermeer and the other Dutch genre painters. I was captivated by the luminosity, depth and intricacy of their portrayals of everyday activities."

Similar slices of life have also become the focus of Ann's international award-winning drawings and paintings. The artist begins each with a loose, gestural sketch giving movement to the initial composition which is then perfected into a line drawing. The artist uses Bristol paper for her drawings, gently applying forty or more layers of wax pencil, a modern medium which neither smears nor erases easily. This layering technique gives the image a high degree of richness and detail not possible with carbon or charcoal. By contrast, when she paints in oil, she employs the techniques of the Old Masters working on smooth mahogany boards prepared with three coats of rabbit skin glue and two layers of whiting. Like the Masters, Ann also blends her own paints, using powdered pigments and black oil which she makes by boiling linseed oil and lead. Her first layer is a toned wash followed by a burnt umber rendering similar to a sepia photo to establish values. Then several layers of color are added, ending with two more layers of direct scumbling (opaque paint), and glaze (transparent paint) applied judiciously where needed for punch. From start to finish, each layer is worked into a handmade Flemish medium. The overall result is something akin to lining up panes of glass with the light bouncing back through each one. Ann comments, "Although the process is time consuming, it yields a luminosity and depth unmatched by other more expedient techniques."

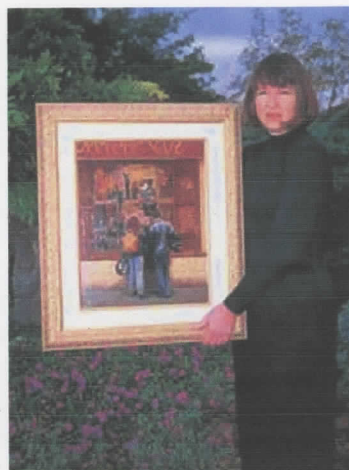
Raised in a home environment enriched by the presence of music, books and art (relatives owned Tom Lea originals and her uncle, Tom Moore, was a cartoonist for Archie Comics), it comes as no surprise that Ann would find her own creative niche. Discovering her talent for the wax pencil at the Art Academy of El Paso in her late teens, she spent the next twenty years honing her experiences in both art and life. Between 1974 and 1994, she studied briefly at the American Academy of Art in Paris and the Schuler School of Fine Art in Baltimore, and was the owner of two galleries, The Montwood Gallery, which she opened in 1974 at the age of 22, and Massey Fine Arts (1992-1994) which showcased her work and that of other representational artists. Ann now resides in Paris, living and creating her art in a small (420 square foot) apartment/studio.



A realist at heart, figurative work has become Ann's forte. Although her nude wax pencil drawings depict the ideal female figure, Ann confides that she is most inspired by faces proudly displaying their badges of honor, the lines of aging which offer fascinating glimpses into the personality of the subject. Reflecting on her love for portraiture, one might ask, "Why are so many of Ann's figures seen from behind?" She explains, "I love to draw the viewers into my work by stimulating their imagination. Sometimes, what is not specifically stated is more interesting." Laughingly, she confides, "It even works for me. When I used my cousin's wife as the model for the young lady in "La Maison de Poupées" (literally The House of

Dolls - a nod to Ibsen), I imagined myself in her place as well as that of the child." Ann relates that one of the most pleasing examples of feedback on this technique came from an English teacher who commented that she would like to ask her students to write their own story about Ann's painting, "Christmas in Paris."

Possessing a subtle sense of humor and a keen wit (she is a member of Mensa), Ann delights in weaving symbolic meaning into her compositions, often using inspiration from family, friends and personal possessions. When creating, "The Connoisseur", a composition depicting an artist painting the lovely Medici Fountain in the Luxembourg Gardens, Ann "auditioned" numerous models, including El Paso artist Hal Marcus, and fittingly his wife, Patricia Medici, who were visiting in Paris at the time, before deciding that her long time friend and mentor, Henri, best typified the image she was seeking to capture.



Reminiscing on how quickly the years have passed, Ann finds it difficult to believe that she moved from El Paso 12 years ago. She returns to the United States on a yearly basis to visit family and friends and to maintain a personal contact with her numerous collectors. Comparing the difference in lifestyles between the two countries she notes, "When you dine out in the U.S., the general attitude is 'What are your plans for the evening?' because most often the meal is a prelude to additional events such as a concert, the theater or even a movie. In France, however, oftending out is the evening. "There is an art of conversation here which is quite interesting. France has always been a café society. Think of the cash-strapped artists at the turn of the century, who were able to spend hours in passionate discussions with friends simply by ordering a cup of coffee. Nothing has changed except that visitors may be appalled at spending \$9 for a coke on the Champs Elysées. I just remind them that they have rented that precious piece of real estate for the afternoon, so they should stay awhile and enjoy it."



Major collections of artwork are also more accessible. Metaphorically, Ann refers to the Louvre Museum as an annex of her home. "It's less than 25 minutes away by the Metro so I can go there whenever I desire. The museum's collection of Masterworks is my touchstone, giving me inspiration when I need it. My priorities have changed regarding travel as well. I have revised my itinerary on several trips home simply to take in exhibitions such as the van Mieris in D. C. or the Terborch in Detroit. If I were still living in El Paso, chances are I would not have traveled so far just to see these exhibitions. Europeans have a different mindset, where travel takes precedence over other options."

In addition to her commitment to her art, Ann accepted the position of President of the United Kingdom Coloured Pencil Society in 2004. "However, I will also be chained to the easel for the next few months working on "The Marionette Theatre," with the hope of having it completed before the end of 2006. Beyond that, my plans for future artwork are as they have always been...based upon one of my favorite quotes: "May the best of the past, be the worst of the future."

To view more of Ann James Massey's work, visit www.AnnJamesMassey.com

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