



Abundant

BEAUTY

BY JOHN O'HERN

COLLECTOR'S FOCUS
FLORALS & BOTANICALS

Polly Thayer (Starr) (1904-2006) wrote, "I want to learn to see with my whole being, and to communicate what I experience. William Blake called it seeing through the eye rather than with the eye; instead of superimposing my own expectations on a subject, I seek what the form will reveal of essence, what the visible will tell me of the invisible. It is an effort that requires intense, prayerful attention, but if the seeing is honest and the hand is well trained, a revelation will emerge."

Known for her portraits and landscapes, her florals are soft abstractions as if the substance of the blossoms has gone on and left their essence behind. In *The Bowl*, gossamer Queen Anne's lace and substantial pink and blue hydrangea blend in an explosion of color.

1. **Winfield Gallery,**
Kinglets and Magnolias,
acrylic on panel, 11 x 11",
by Andrea Johnson.

2. **Marc Straus Gallery,**
Transgenic Bouquets—
The Von Humboldt, oil on
wood panel, 28 x 22",
by Clive Smith.

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3. Trina Moore, *Rose for Carla Jean*, oil and wax on canvas, 48 x 48" 4. Nedra Matteucci Galleries, *Taos Iris Garden*, oil on linen, 36 x 36", by Walt Gonske. 5. George Billis Gallery, *Zinnias in a Jar*, oil on panel, 24 x 18", by Peggie Blizzard. 6. Nedra Matteucci Galleries, *Sunflowers in a Glass Vase*, oil on panel, 48 x 36", by Martin Mooney. 7. Nedra Matteucci Galleries, *Pewter and Peonies*, oil on canvas, 14 x 18", by Joan Potter.

Eric Wert's philosophy is not dissimilar to that of Thayer. He says, "While my technique is precise, the paintings are a meditation on the impossibility of control over nature—human and otherwise. They're *vanitas* paintings, about the transitory nature of wealth, life, relationships and understanding." His upended still lifes, such as *Basilisk*, are odes to art history and to the deeper beauty in the conventionally beautiful. His wife, Marci Rae McDade, an expert in fiber arts, introduced him to the rich fabrics that appear in his paintings. I was about to comment on the unusual black background of *Basilisk* until I looked closely and saw its subtle blue, black and red pattern. The translucent veins of the carnivorous sarracenia flowers are a natural

complement to the intricate design of the copper framework for the enamel on the Japanese green cloisonné vase.

In her florals, Andrea Johnson celebrates the colorful relationships between birds and blossoms. She paints the subtle changes in the atmospheric light of the landscape of the Salinas Valley and the Monterey Peninsula. Living on a ranch, she is immersed daily in the rich variety of flora and fauna around her. "This valley gives life to many," she says. "The cycle of earth to green to harvest reflects the larger cycle of life from beginning to end and then beginning again. John Steinbeck once declared it his intention to tell 'the story of this whole valley...so that it would be the valley of the world.' He wanted

readers of *East of Eden* to feel afterward that they would have a sense of belonging in Salinas Valley, that they would 'actually be a native of that valley.' It is my hope that I too have been able to capture a sense of place and the spirit of this valley called Salinas," she says.

In *Kinglets and Magnolias*, the blossoms reflect "beginning again." The magnolia trees shed their leaves in their dormant period and erupt in late winter to spring with large, colorful pink blossoms on bare branches.

Clive Smith is full of surprises. Winner of the 1999 BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery in London, for one of his isolated figures, he has gone on to paint people and plant life in various

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8. George Billis Gallery, *Two Blue Jars with Pink Flowers*, oil on panel, 24 x 36", by Peggie Blizzard. 9. William Baczek Fine Arts, *Basilisk*, oil on aluminum, 32 x 24", by Eric Wert. 10. Vose Galleries, *The Bowl*, oil on paper, 21¼ x 29¼", Polly Thayer (Starr) (1904-2006). 11. George Billis Gallery, *Wilted Roses – Red*, oil on panel, 30 x 40", by Peggie Blizzard.