SECOND NATURE

Tuscany is Lyall’s “other” home. It is where she occasionally lives, often visits and always paints. Some artists have the gift of absorbing the spirit—the essence—of the place in which they paint, but Lyall’s gift goes beyond simply absorbing. She does something extraordinary in her art. She convenes with Tuscany’s bounty of nature and art as if she were coming together with cherished companions—companions who never cease to delight, not only because they always reveal something wondrous, something unsuspected, but also because they perpetually enchant with their haunting, mystical qualities. I look at paintings such as Cala di Forno and see Lyall in dialogue with Sienese masters of the fourteenth century—the Lorenzetti brothers, or perhaps Simone Martini, whose frescoed panoramas of Tuscan landscapes sweep before us in similar perspective; and which convey a similar mood of timelessness. The light-swathed, monolithic forms—natural and man-made—of Winter Morning suggest to me that Lyall has engaged the early Renaissance Giotto in conversation about painting with simplifying directness. Not all her painter-companions are so far back in time, though their ways of perceiving shapes and light are in concert. In Tuscan Village, the wall in glowing yellow, curving to embrace a lone tree and house might, I think, have been described by the brush of the nineteenth-century Giuseppe Abbati, or maybe Giovanni Fattori. The vision of a file of cypresses and single pine sheltering three buildings (Radda-in-Chianti) sparks—for me—the memory of Giorgio Morandi’s calm still-lives and landscapes.

Lyall’s palette—always joyful, always vibrant—distills the light into tones that range from robust and earth-bound to subdued and lyrical. Through her palette she has widened her circle of painter-companions to include French artists, especially Bonnard. But, after all, Bonnard and his compatriots come from a neighbouring Mediterranean land, where the nature is not so different from that in Italy. And what is art—as they would say in the Renaissance—if not a second nature?

Sabine Eiche

Sabine Eiche, PhD (Princeton), MFA (Princeton), MA (Univ. of British Columbia), is a freelance art historian, writer and translator who lived in Florence for over thirty years. She is an authority on sixteenth-century central Italian art and architecture and writes about Italian art, food, and culture (www.members.shaw.ca/seiche).
Radda-in-Chianti
2009, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 in.
REVISITATIONS

In the 90s I lived in Florence, Italy. That experience changed the course of my life. Though I now reside in San Francisco, I have returned to Tuscany many times for extended periods over the last decade. In Italy and California, certain places contain for me combined qualities of mystery, harmony, and longing that I am compelled to revisit, reexamine, repaint. Among these: the Parco dell’Uccellina in Maremma with its medieval towers and coastline, the landscape south of Florence near Radda-in-Chianti, and pockets of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. I go back to these places again and again to paint into the enchantment they hold.

Study for Radda-in-Chianti
2004, pencil on paper, 3 3/4 x 4 in.
Studies for Castle, Talamone, 1997-2009, pencil on paper, 4 x 5 3/4 in. each
Castle, Talamone
2009, oil on canvas, 40 x 50 in.
Cala di Forno
2009, oil on canvas, 40 x 50 in.

Study for Cala di Forno, 1997, pencil on paper, 4 x 5 3/4 in.
Cala di Forno
2009, gouache on paper, 15 1/8 x 16 1/4 in.
Solitude
2008, oil on canvas, 12 x 12 in.

Study for Solitude, 2008, pencil on paper, 4 x 4 in.
Tuscan Village
2009, oil on linen, 16 x 16 in.

Study for Tuscan Village, 1995, pencil on paper, 4 x 3 3/4 in.
Golden Gate Park, Speedway Meadow
2009, gouache on paper, 18 1/4 x 15 1/8 in.

Golden Gate Park
2009, gouache on paper, 18 7/8 x 15 1/4 in.
details, La Torre (The Tower)
2007, artist book, 4 x 8 x 4 1/4 in. (opened)
10 original gouache on paper paintings, 3 x 3 in. each
details, I Campi (The Fields)
2007, artist book, 6 x 15 1/2 x 8 in. (opened)
18 original ink wash drawings, 4 x 4 7/8 in. each
ARTIST AND WRITER LYALL F. HARRIS is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate in Art History of Northwestern University. She studied painting and drawing for two years at the San Francisco Art Institute and California College of Arts. Since 1999 her work has been exhibited in more than one hundred exhibitions and recognized with twenty awards. She has been granted three fellowships at the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. With her Florentine husband and two daughters, she continues to spend time each year painting and writing in Tuscany.

Winter Morning
2009, oil on canvas, 12 x 16 in.
SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS WITH AWARDS
National Academy Museum, New York, NY: 175th Annual Exhibition - The George Hitchcock Prize
Hiestand Gallery, Miami University, Oxford, OH: Young Painters Competition for the William and Dorothy Yeck $10,000 Purchase Award - Second Place
Nicolet College Gallery, Rhinelander, WI: Northern National Juried Art Competition - Mel and Linda Davidson Award
Friesen Gallery with Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA: 13th International Open Exhibition; Contemporary Pastel Impressionists - Award of Merit
Kirkland Fine Arts Center, Millikin University, Decatur, IL in three separate biennial exhibitions of Works on Paper - Juror’s Merit Award, Juror’s Recognition Award and Honorable Mention
Art Association of Harrisburg, Harrisburg, PA in two separate Annual Juried Exhibitions - First Prize, Watercolors and Second Prize, Other Media

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS
Sonoma Museum of Visual Art, Santa Rosa, CA: California Small Works
San Diego Art Institute, San Diego, CA: 43rd Annual International Awarded Exhibition
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN: Sixty Square Inches (2008 & 2006)
W. Keith and Janet Kellogg University Art Gallery, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, CA: Ink and Clay 27
San Francisco Public Library, San Francisco, CA: Reversing Vandalism
National Art League, Douglastown, NY: 70th Annual Open Exhibition
Weber State University, Ogden, UT: What is Drawing Now?
Coyote Gallery, Butte Glenn College, Chico, CA: Conceptually Bound 2, An Exhibition of Artist Bound Books
Creative Arts Workshop, New Haven, CT: Vital Signs: Drawing as Inquiry
Brand Library and Art Center, Glendale, CA: 29th Annual Juried Exhibition; Works on Paper
Maryland Federation of Art, Annapolis, MD: American Landscapes 2002

SELECTED FEATURED ARTIST & SMALL GROUP EXHIBITIONS
Cecile Moochnek Gallery, Berkeley, CA: The Gift of Art - featured artist
Comerford Hennessy, Bridgehampton, NY: Landscape Paintings and Collages - featured artist
Thomas Reynolds Gallery, San Francisco, CA: Small Treasures - featured artist
Robert A. Peck Arts Center, Central Wyoming College, Riverton, WY: Mixed Vistas - five person invitational
Art Association of Harrisburg, Harrisburg, PA: Invitational Exhibition - five person invitational
This exhibition simply would not be possible without my in-laws in Florence and my family in Virginia who took care of my children during various phases of the development of this body of work. I am also grateful to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts for the opportunity to paint in that ideal environment. And many thanks to my husband, Francesco, for his keen eye and the conviction behind his encouragement.

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of my dear friend, Anne Marino (1934-2009).

for Anne

A November wind
carves the Ginkgo expertly.
Miniature fans
flap, shiver; several turn
then rest. A single yellow
leaf pirouettes, soundlessly
unwinding a minute coil.

It sways unburdened
and dips towards the cottony pool.
I do not use linear perspective, but achieve depth by color—the function of one color with another.

I strip the design to essentials; the facts do not interest me as much as the essence of nature.

—Milton Avery, 1952