

The Poetry of Painting

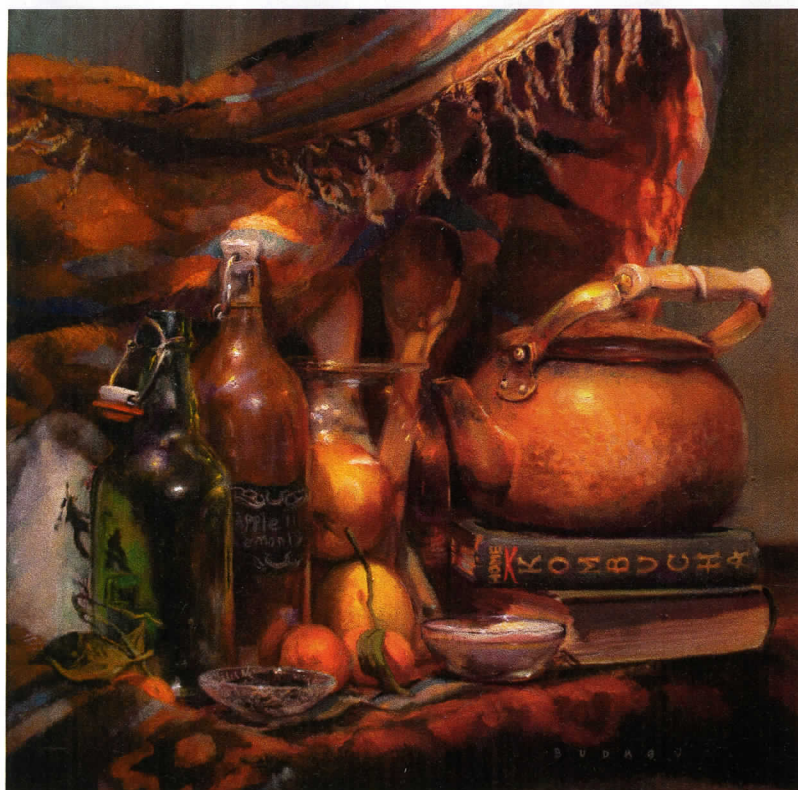
In its definition of “still life”, the Tate museum in London states, “In the hierarchy of genres (or subject types) for art established in the 17th century by the French Academy, still life was ranked at the bottom—fifth after history painting, portraiture, genre painting (scenes of everyday life) and landscape. Still life and landscape were considered lowly because they did not involve human subject matter.”

Centuries earlier, however, Leonardo da Vinci observed, “Painting is poetry that is seen rather than felt, and poetry is painting that is felt rather than seen.”

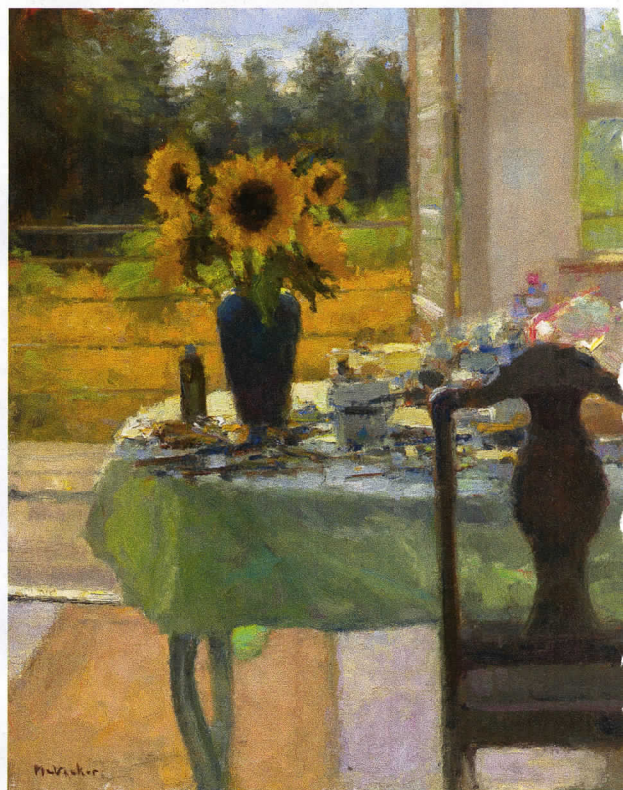
American Legacy Fine Arts in Pasadena, California, sides with da Vinci in its exhibition *The Poetry of Still Life*, on view from April 21 through May 21. The gallery’s director, Elaine Adams, observes, “Contrary to the term, ‘still life’ the genre can be dynamic and filled with narrative overtones and symbolism.”



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1
Mary Kay West, *Floral in Bookcase*, oil on panel, 15¼ x 19¼"

2
Nikita Budkov, *The Making of Kombucha*, oil on linen, 14 x 14"

3
Jim McVicker, *Sunflowers*, oil on linen panel, 20 x 16"

4
Peter Adams, *Two Lohans and Kwan Yin*, oil on panel, 24 x 20"

Mary Kay West has designed stage sets in her career and, today, paints shadow boxes as settings for her still lifes. In her painting *Floral in Bookcase*, she refers to the father of American poetry himself with a vase of peonies sitting on a copy of Walt Whitman's anthology, *Leaves of Grass*. Next to it is a well-worn copy of Kimon Nicolaïdes' *The Natural Way to Draw*. She upends the idea of still life ("nature morte" in French) with living birds.

Jim McVicker learned to paint by studying the great artists of the past, observing nature and working with other artists. He and his wife, Terry, enjoy painting out-of-doors near their home

in Northern California. In *Sunflowers*, he shows the best of both worlds, the sunlit landscape and a bouquet of sunflowers bringing nature indoors. In his impressionistic style, sunlight reflects off surfaces and makes the tablecloth translucent.

Peter Adams brings light to Asian artifacts from two votive candles in *Two Lohans and Kwan Yin*. In Buddhism, Lohans have reached enlightenment but not the higher level of nirvana and the Kwan Yin, the bodhisattva of compassion, has reached enlightenment but has chosen to forego nirvana to serve as an example to others. In this painting, enlightenment takes on both corporeal and non-corporeal form.

Nikita Budkov has painted *Mystic Science, Making a Kombucha*, a kind of fermented tea. He acknowledges his taking artistic license as he explains, "Everything I have here is an ingredient or a utensil used to make a kombucha. Well, maybe books are not that essential and so are the big wooden spoons, but they look good..." The Russian-American artist says, "Above all, I appreciate ambient atmosphere, and pursue the mystical and the beautiful qualities of life." ●

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