

A Feminine Perspective

ARTIST: Lou Jene Carter (1933-) Springville, Utah

TITLE: *Mostly Flowers* 1993

MEDIA: Oil on canvas

SIZE: 28" x 27"

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Lou Jene Mountford Carter was born in Payson, Utah, on May 22, 1933. As a young child she enjoyed drawing, coloring, and modeling and always wanted to be an artist. Her parents encouraged her to develop her talents. In the ninth grade she studied with Floyd Breinholt at Farrer Junior High, and later she studied commercial art at Granite and Springville High Schools.

In 1950, Lou Jene married Richard C. Carter, and over the next 15 years, she devoted her energies to raising 4 children, which took all her time. Then in 1966, she began studying art at Utah Valley Community College (now Utah Valley State College) and at Brigham Young University, where she took night classes. While attending UVCC she studied with Kent Goodliffe, who encouraged her to take her art more seriously. However, Lou Jene continued to work full time and paint when she could. Then in 1979, an artist friend died suddenly, causing Carter to reevaluate her life, quit her job, and embark on a full-time career as an artist.

Since that time, Carter has attended workshops given by renowned artists, including Daniel E. Green--nationally famous portrait painter, Harvey Dinnerstein--well-known New York illustrator, and Albert Handell--master pastelist.

Lou Jene Carter works in both pastels and oils, appreciating pastels for their facility which allows her to quickly and freely express herself and oils for their perfect fit with her interest in realism. She explains that she gets bored easily, and switching between the

two mediums provides needed variety, as does the wide range of subjects she selects. But if she had to choose favorites, she says she would choose florals or still-life paintings. As an artist, she continuously works to improve her technique and to stretch her abilities, labeling herself a "frustrated perfectionist".

Carter has taught classes at the Springville Museum of Art in oil painting and pastels. She has had five one-woman shows. She has exhibited her art at the Kimball Art Center, Park City, Utah; worked in the workshop program at the National Pastel Society, National Arts Club in New York City; and at the Catherine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club in New York City. In addition, her work is included in many public and private collections. Lou Jene Carter has been the recipient of many awards and honors for her paintings.

A number of years ago, Lou Jene and her husband built a new home. Lou Jene helped design the house and oversaw its construction. Busy with the house, and tired of pressure from gallery owners who wanted her to copy popular painters' techniques, she pulled her paintings out of the galleries and stopped trying to be a "successful" artist in terms of money. She does still sell paintings--at least enough to pay for her art supplies--but she now is able to concentrate on making art that expresses who she is without having to deal with pressure to create art that sells. Truly an idealist, but not judgmental of others' choices, she applies her beliefs to own life, content with her freedom.

In addition to wanting to paint as she chooses, Carter left the gallery life because she was more interested in time spent with her family than in time spent cultivating a place in the art world. Like many women artists, the competing demands on time and energy pulled her in too many different directions. One reason Lou Jene uses pastels is because they allow her to create works in a shorter time, and although she prefers oils, she can't always stay at the easel long enough to finish a painting.

Lou Jene is grateful she didn't have schooling that pushed her in a particular direction--thinking what her teachers said was the only truth. No one tells this independent woman what to do; she does what she wants. Although a realist, she loves abstract expressionism and the abstract culture of "form with design"--seeing it as just a different method of expression; but her own exploratory abstract works felt only like decorations and not expressive artworks, so she enjoys good abstract expressionist works at shows and galleries but sticks to realism for her own work, finding that it suits her natural perfectionism and her interests in still life, in particular.

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

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QUESTIONS FOR LOOKING

(History, Aesthetics, Criticism)

When do you think this painting was made? (Recently.) What are the clues that helped you decide? (The arrangement of the objects is nontraditional, informal. The colors are rich and expressive but not fauvist or arbitrary. Depending on their age and art training, the students may not have many ideas, but let them try.)

Where has the artist used repetition in this painting? Do you see warm, cool, or neutral colors in this painting? How is balance achieved in this work? Find all the different kinds of flowers in this painting.

Why do you think the artist has used so many kinds of flowers in one painting? Does this painting express emotion or feeling? Would you like this painting in your house? What is the difference, if any, in having this painting or having lots of flowers on your table?

ACTIVITIES

1. Visual Arts-perceiving

Objective: The students will demonstrate an understanding of rhythm by using this principle successfully in a drawing or painting.

Show the class the image of *Mostly Flowers* by Lou Jene Carter and have the students see how many kinds of flowers and floral motifs are used in the painting. Discuss with them how the artist has used the repetition and variation of pattern, color, shape, etc., to create rhythm in her painting. (Rhythm is varied movement.)

You may want to show and briefly discuss other artworks that also have strong rhythmic components such as *Sunrise*, North Rim Grand Canyon and *Dark Side of the Garden*.

Assign the students to make a drawing or painting that demonstrates rhythm. You may choose to have the students set up and use a still life arrangement as Carter has, or you may want to allow the students the latitude to choose their own subjects, real or imaginary.

When the activity is finished, have the students display their works and discuss the various ways the students have created rhythm in their pieces.

2. Visual Arts-expressing

Objective: The students will demonstrate an understanding of how art differs from illustration by making two drawings, one an illustration, one an artwork.

Show the students the image of *Mostly Flowers* by Lou Jene Carter and one or more illustrations from a flower identification guide. Lead a class discussion about the differences between illustration and art. Your discussion should include the following points:

1. Purpose--illustrations convey knowledge or information and art conveys ideas, feelings, or creates beauty.
2. Quality--illustrations are focused on being accurate and art is focused on expression.

If the students are sophisticated enough to point out that some "illustrations" are considered art, allow them to explore the fine and sometimes fuzzy line that separates the two (i.e. Audubon's drawings of birds). You may want to point out that sometimes the line is drawn by personal preference. You can choose to make the assignment simple--broad differences between the two drawings, or complex--allowing students to visually explore the line between illustration and art.

Assign the students to make two drawings or paintings of the same flower, plant, fruit, or vegetable. The first drawing should be an illustration that is as accurate as possible. If the students' wish, they can include cross sections, labels, or other information. The second drawing should have an artistic purpose (see discussion above). If appropriate, you can use subject matter that is being studied or that relates to science curriculum.

Create a class display of the drawings that demonstrates the differences between the two approaches.

3. Science

Objective: The students will demonstrate an understanding of the basic flower parts by drawing and labeling these parts.

Show the class the image of *Mostly Flowers* and have the students see how many real and imaginary flowers they can pick out. Use this discussion as a lead-in to a lesson on flower parts. If possible, show examples of Redoute's flower paintings.

After presenting the information to the students, have them draw and label the flower parts they have just learned. If possible, have some real flowers for the students to look at both as they learn and also as they make their drawings.

4. Music/Dance

Objective: The students will increase their knowledge of rhythm by experimenting with the production of rhythm in sound and in movement.

Show the class the image of *Mostly Flowers* and discuss rhythm as indicated in the first art activity, above. Then introduce the concept of rhythm in sound and movement.

Use a fun, experimental approach for whatever level the students are at. An easy way to begin is by clapping rhythms that the students copy. See how complicated and long the rhythm patterns can get before the students can't repeat them. Give some of the students a turn to be "Leader. "

This same approach can be used for rhythmic movement--one person gets to be leader and make up a short pattern of repeated and varied movements the rest of the class must copy.

If you have rhythm band instruments allow the children to use them or to find various surfaces that work as rhythm instruments. Have some of the class make rhythmic patterns while others make up appropriate patterns or move to the rhythms improvisationally.

If you know local musicians or dancers you may be able to get one or more to come help you with this activity. If not, have fun and experiment along with the children.