

Louise Minks



Louise Minks and Sandy Denis have painted together for at least 30 years now. Their shared painting exhibit “Two Part Harmony” showing 10/29 - 11/24 at the Shelburne Arts Coop may--or may not--display two perspectives on a single scene. Since both artists are very prolific and have traveled extensively, there is such a huge variety of work to choose from that the subject matter may not overlap even though the two have often painted the same view, side by side, in travels to the southwest US and in southern France and all over New England.

Louise’s portrayal of landscape does not combine the abstract and geometric elements that Sandy incorporates into her work. Both painters favor a similar “bold, juicy” palette. Louise will show recent work indicative of a new exploration of floral close-ups inspired by photographs. “These are so free and different, so lively, I am looking for free and lively, vibrant color” she explained. “When I came across the floral photos I just came to a screeching halt and started working on them right away, I was so excited.”

The vibration of juxtaposed color is one of many lessons Louise has absorbed from Sandy over the years. Believe it or not, given her high level of accomplishment, Louise has never had any formal art classes. “So, Sandy has been a huge influence on me--she’ll be embarrassed that I say this since she is shy about this--but I feel she is one of the most imaginative, creative painters that I have ever met” said Louise. “And I think young artists need to hear that you do not have to do art school. I took workshops as an adult in my thirties, I worked with three primary teachers,



professional plein aire painters, and Sandy.”

Acrylic painting is another method learned together with Sandy. Louise started off in oils, doing mostly portraiture, and didn’t use acrylic paints until faced with a trip to Greece.”I really wanted to

paint, but I couldn't take oils. I couldn't be on a bus with wet paintings and all that. Sandy was really committed to acrylics and so I thought I would teach myself acrylics; from then on I have been an acrylic painter." Louise has recently discovered Golden Open acrylic paint and raves about its ability to combine the convenience of acrylic paint with a longer drying time so that layers may be worked together as in oil painting, and it doesn't darken as it dries.

Another theme in her work is something she calls "The Transportation Blues." "I've always found cars, trucks, and gas stations really, really fun and funky, so about 30 years ago I started doing them...I'll do one or two car or truck paintings a year and the ones that are favorites I will make into tiles." "Tiles" refers to square ceramic tiles with an image bonded to it. Made into coasters and used to decorate wooden tool holders, these items form the bread and butter of her art business. "Years and years ago, I realized that if I wanted to be a painter, I had to come up with some low budget items." Often, she uses the Transportation Blues images for her tool holders in order to provide a



solution for the common "man-gift" dilemma.

With a master's degree in US History and a background in teaching, Louise feels that she is primarily a teacher, rather than an artist. She has done several projects over the years that combine both interests in unique ways. One project is a series of large, door sized oil portraits of African Americans that toured local schools for 15 years or more. Along with notable historic figures such as Martin Luther King and Sojourner Truth, she featured a teenager from her church youth group, a man who had an encounter with a Klan member, and gospel figures from the contemporary music scene. "I had an African American wood carver who would come with me to the schools, and we would mount the paintings in a school, sometimes a painting in each classroom, that was the best. It was so cool. John had a carved mirror that went with each painting and they were in the school for two or three months, rotating around the classrooms. I would do an introductory program with materials about the people but it was up to the teachers and the school after that. Every time this goes somewhere it's a thrill... I have no modesty about it: it's a great project!"

Another educational, historical series she is working on combines paintings she did at several Civil War battlefields with charcoal sketches drawn from actual photos of war scenes at those locations. The paintings depict the contemporary and very sanitized National Parks version underneath raw and gripping black and white dramas from those battles. These may be displayed at schools or libraries when completed--like the earlier portraits, they will not be for sale.



Louise's involvement with the Shelburne Arts Coop began about 14 years ago, a connection made through Sandy. The pair worked together hanging the monthly shows and decorating the window until about a year ago. She treasures her West County coop experience and has enjoyed contributing to the lively mix of work in the gallery, but is currently a non-working member.

Louise is currently very involved in keeping the Sawmill River Arts Cooperative gallery going and it has absorbed a lot of her time. It's a fairly new venture located in the Montague Book Mill complex in Louise's former studio space. She feels strongly about maintaining an artistic presence at the location she has been at since 1997, and when she lost her studio lease there, she decided to invest energy in the new Coop, where she has plenty of work to show visitors. A loss for our Shelburne store in some ways, but definitely a win/win for growing the Coop business model in Western Mass!

If you want to learn more about Louise please visit her website at: www.louiseminks.com