

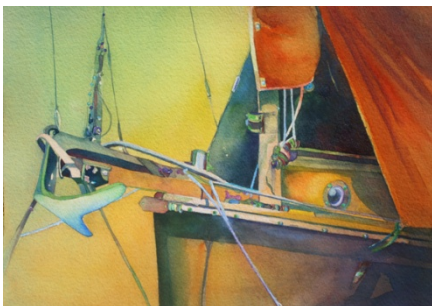
Amy McKay - Living the dream life

Written by Alisha Brown



Amy McKay was artistically gifted from the age of seven and her parents were unusual by encouraging her. The typical reaction of a parent to a child's artistic skill is to stomp it out as quickly as possible...starve it in the dark until there is only a spindly shadow left to give the future adult a little personality. Recognizing Amy's skill, her parents enrolled her in the Maryland Institute of Art on the weekends to start honing her skills. Most parents would be surprised to learn that sports and academic scholarships aren't the only way to get through college. Amy lived every aspiring artist's dream with an art scholarship to University of Maryland, but that wasn't enough for her. She used her scholarship to study Landscape Architecture, as well as art. During this journey, Amy found water color and has made the most of her passion.

My first glimpse of Amy McKay was at the reception for her show, Migrations and Explorations, which opened on May 1st. She was charmingly nervous and vulnerable, but she had no need to worry; her work is gorgeous and amazing. She does a variety of work, including landscapes, nudes, birds, and florals. As you walk into the One Eleven Art Gallery, you are greeted by "Awakenings," a floral piece on a large scale sprinkled with stars, sunsets and butterflies. Amy said this piece was inspired by an experience on an eco-conservation trip to Costa Rica. As she was hiking with friends, their party was engulfed by a swarm of blue morpho butterflies. Years later she was able to channel that magical moment into a painting, which has won numerous awards. Since it represents both a rare experience and has captured a time in her life when many things were changing, Amy secretly hopes will remain permanently in her personal collection. Amy's other floral paintings have a Georgia O'Keefe quality and were probably created with a brush that had been dipped in the Northern Lights instead of paint. I know that seems overly dramatic, but if you have ever seen the Northern lights, you will recognize their prismatic variation of color in Amy's paintings.



Amy says that she is a naturalist; trying to capture not only the natural world, but human nature as well. She attempts to put the energy of life into her paintings, which she calls it hyper-realism, where she endeavors to capture the brightest colors present. This is especially evident in a close up of the bow of a boat, titled "Sleeps With One Eye Open," which is anything but the typical white boat, showing the palette of a reflected sunset instead. Her nudes are of the sort that you can examine for long periods of time without awakening that knee jerk reaction of shame that has been ingrained by our society: bright colors, indistinct details, but capturing the essence of the moment.

When asked what inspires her about the Hampton Roads area, she immediately acknowledges her fellow artists. There are numerous artists throughout the area and it is like one great community. Despite insufficient patronage to support the sheer number of artists in the area, there is no sense of competition. Instead everyone is supportive of each other. Amy is especially grateful to her fellow artists at One Eleven Art. She says that their support and friendship has helped her get through some difficult times in her life, such as when her husband was deployed.

Amy's show, Migrations and Explorations, will run until June 5, 2009. One Eleven Art is located 111 Pennsylvania Ave., Norfolk, VA, (757-625-1110) and you can park right in front of the building on the street. The current gallery hours are Wed-Sat 1-5 p.m., and Sun 1-4 p.m. or by appointment. She also has several pieces in the "Just Blooming" show until July 20th in Pembroke 4 Gallery, located near Towncenter at Pembroke Office Center - Building 4, 291 Independence Blvd., Suite 128, Virginia Beach, VA 23462 (757-493-9900). The Pembroke 4 art Gallery is open Mon-Fri, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and has free parking. Visit to see how Amy incorporates her personal philosophy of "anything is possible" into her paintings.

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