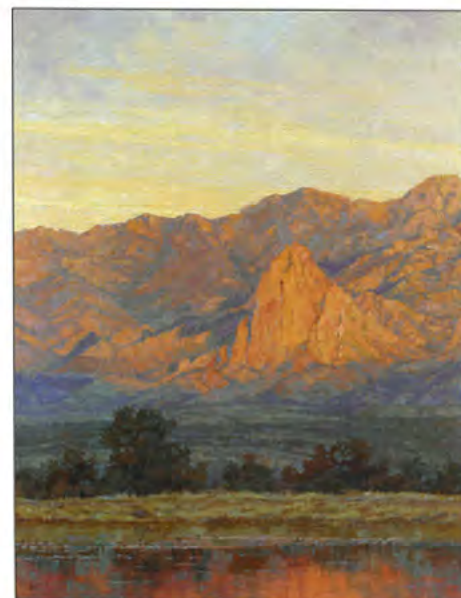


Sold on Art



Trail into Dusk, by Darcie Peet, oil, 24" x 24"
Linda Vista Trail at the foot of Pusch Ridge, northwest Tucson



Coral Reflections, by Darcie Peet,
oil, 48" x 36"
A dusk view of Elephant Head in the Santa Rita Mountains, near Green Valley

Darcie Peet: *A Painter's Journey*

by Lorraine A. DarConte

(This is another in a series of articles profiling The DesertLeaf's art-related advertisers.)

Darcie Peet's studio is filled with the things one would expect to find in an artist's workspace — brushes and paints, canvases and art books and about a dozen or so paintings, some finished, others in various stages of completion. The light-filled space also is home to her very worn saddle and chaps, which only hint at the active lifestyle she leads. It's this lifestyle — hiking, canoeing and horseback riding — that is often reflected in her paintings.

"My love of painting — and the reason I paint — is the love of the process," says Peet. "I love moving that paint around with my brushes, twirling, pushing, pulling, twisting, scrubbing." Peet's process consists of a series of building blocks, which typically begins with a canvas that's toned with a very thin wash. "I use a toned canvas, which is the first layer, instead of a white canvas because of the way I use a brush and because a white canvas may distract the viewer's eye and take it away from the journey — the focal point in the canvas," explains the artist.

The next of Peet's building blocks is the composition, which she lays out with transparencies: "A transparent paint allows me to see the rise and fall of the paint's texture as it sinks into the canvas. Transparencies create a shimmering undercoat that I can build upon. In many cases, I will drag more opaque paints over the undercoat, but a lot of the shimmering under paint still shows through. . . . The layering and building block process is part of the thrill of painting for me."

Peet, who describes her style as impressionistic, utilizes this same building-block process whether she's working in the studio or the field (plein air). "When I work in the studio I try to use the same processes," Peet says, "though in the studio I have the advantage of allowing those transparent colors to set up and dry.

"In the field, I'm laying them down, and within half an hour, I work right back on top of them. But I'm still working in the same manner because it helps me sort out compositional problems, such as the beautiful values of light and shadows found here in the desert Southwest. The play of warm versus cool and how that becomes a wonderful play of shadow and the feeling of sunlight hitting huge cottonwoods — those are the 'wow' elements of a painting," she says. "It's at that stage where I can modify a tree, elongate a shadow, and/or slightly shift a mountain that makes for a stronger composition and a dance across the surface of the canvas."

Though Peet clearly loves the process of painting, researching her subject matter also brings her joy. She comes from a family that loved the outdoors, and so she grew up horseback riding and hiking and biking in the Rockies. "I like to hike and find out what's around that

next corner, which sometimes gets me in trouble," she laughs.

Peet finds more than just pretty scenes to paint on her excursions; she finds power and peace, beauty and serenity. "When I go some place as special as the Canadian Rockies, the potential for visual stimulation is so tremendous that I take photographs rather than paint on site. Instead of spending a couple hours doing a morning painting and several hours for an afternoon painting, I visit a lot of places, photograph them and bring back with me a myriad of potential subject matter."



Thank Goodness Rabbits Don't Eat Geraniums,
by Darcie Peet, oil, 16" x 16"

On any given trip — Alaska is next — Peet can encounter winter storms, fanciful clouds, new snow on high peaks or lifting clouds full of atmosphere. She has captured thousands of potential paintings on film, and although photos may not show the warmth or coolness in a shadow, Peet, thanks to her many years spent working in the field, can use a photograph as a stepping-stone.

"I love the desert Southwest and the Rocky Mountains, which is evident in most of my work. I've lived in Colorado for more than 30 years and in Arizona for 20," says Peet, who has a few favorite places in and around Tucson where she likes to paint. "In Saguaro National Monument West, there are a couple of washes that take me on a great winding journey back toward the high mountains where I find long shadows from the giant saguaro and different desert shrubs," she says. "In the very early morning, if I look right into the sun, everything is very, very light, with hazy soft colors and just an edge of brilliance and illumination."

In Honeybee Canyon, Peet likes to hike toward the ancient petroglyphs. In the spring, she heads out to Madera Canyon in search of Mexican poppies. "There's good material out there," she says, "so I get all around."

Nature isn't Peet's only inspiration. She is also influenced by the works of a variety of artists, including painters Ted Goerschner, C. W. Mundy, Richard Schmid and Jim Reynolds, and wildlife painter Jim Morgan. And she's always been impressed by the determination and dedication of historically significant artists such as Michelangelo, Caravaggio and Monet.

"As a child, I was able to visit the Chicago Art Institute and see an exhibit of the Impressionists. I'll never forget walking into this huge room in the museum, and the only painting on the back wall was Monet's *Water Lilies*. My mother loved opera, dance, theater and music and she insisted I go to the art museums. My dad instilled hard work and a sense of determination in me — do the best you can, be the best you can be."

Peet plans to continue painting in the future. "I can't imagine having a goal I could actually reach other than continuing to develop. I'm always refining, growing and listening. There is no stopping point," concludes Peet. "I never think I've done my last greatest painting. I always think there's work ahead of me."

Darcie Peet has had a multifaceted career in fine art and design, including teaching, graphic design and advertising. She has a bachelor's in Fine Arts and a master's in Interior Design. Peet is affiliated with the Oil Painters of America (OPA); Rocky Mountain Plein Air Painters (signature member); Tucson Plein Air Painters' Society; and the Laguna Plein Air Painters Association. Peet's work is in the permanent collection of the Pearce Museum, Corsicana, Texas, and she recently finished a 4' x 6' commission for the Arrabelle Hotel in Vail, Colo. In Southern Arizona, her art is represented by Big Horn Galleries in Tubac. For more information visit www.darciepeet.com.

Lorraine A. DarConte is a local freelance writer. Comments for publication should be addressed to letters@desertleaf.com.