



ARTIST OF THE WEST

MICHELE CORRIEL

Loretta Domaszewski: Exploring Nature

“Art is not what you see,
but what you make others see.”

— EDGAR DEGAS

WITH DABS OF OIL PAINT edged around her rectangular glass palette, Loretta Domaszewski stands before a three-by-four-foot canvas, one of four pieces she’s working on. Each one in this series speaks to the essential elements: fire, water, air, and earth. Using a vibrant, salmon-colored underpainting, Domaszewski reaches for a flat-bristled brush to start the movement of clouds at sunset.

“I’ve been doing artwork for over 40 years but I keep coming back to the same themes,” she says, touching a corner of her brush to a dark blue mound of oil paint. “Journey, path, quest ... and nature. I feel nature is the way for me to think about myself.” By exploring the subject of nature, Domaszewski is able to pursue her conceptual journey. Her art consistently includes waterways, bicycle paths, and trails. Whether it’s through her teaching or the many murals she paints, Domaszewski works actively in conservation and with nonprofits that deal with watershed issues. Her love for painting outdoors comes through in everything she does. Even if she’s not standing out in the weather, the natural world surrounds her thoughts.

“Painting *plein air* is like a meditation for me,” she says. “It’s all about getting in touch with who we are and how we’re connected to the earth. Only through nature can we know ourselves.”

SINGING
CANYON
OIL | 30 X 16 INCHES

Walking up to the canvas, Domaszewski begins to circle her brush on the surface, swirling color upon color, like



a dance between herself and an image in her head. She seamlessly moves from one corner of the canvas to the other, then progresses into new areas.

It was through her earlier work with pastels that Domaszewski was able to obtain a deep understanding of color, and how to pull those colors out of nature. Of the many classes she teaches, a workshop called Color Meditation explores the characteristics of color through guided, nonrepresentational painting. She encourages students to work with natural mineral pigments and fluid watercolor techniques.

"I always knew I'd be an artist," she says, going back to the palette to load her brush with more blue. "My dad was a sign painter and a folk artist, so I spent a lot of time watching him."

Zack Terakedis, owner of the Billings, Montana, gallery Terakedis Fine Art, was introduced to Domaszewski's work through another gallery that has since closed.

"She is an amazing human, without question," he says. "I enjoy her technique and her use of light in representing the elements of nature. She really draws from personal experiences."

Incorporating the detritus of everyday life outdoors, Domaszewski paintings have coffee grounds, feathers, and soil embedded in them. "But you only discover those things as you get closer to the work," Terakedis says. "Ultimately, the presence of light in her pieces makes people fall in love with her work. Her winter scenes are cold, but there's a softness of the atmosphere that really gets to the feeling of snow."

Terakedis' gallery not only sells art but also brings artists in to demonstrate their work and interact with the public, whether that means talking to collectors or those new to the art world. "By providing demonstrations, I feel like I'm educating and creating new collectors," he says. "I feel like there's a generational gap in understanding the value of original artwork. So we're providing the experience of being around fine art. The creative mindset is so important to our communities."

As it happens, Domaszewski is the perfect artist to promote creativity. Her demonstrations not only reveal technique

SEARCHING
OIL | 36 X 48 INCHES



SKY LIGHT

OIL | 36 X 48 INCHES

but also allow people to appreciate the work on a deeper level.

"She's a whole artist in that she understands her craft well enough to articulate what she's doing," Terakedis says. "She shows people how to create clouds and sky scenes. She's a fabulous educator in that way."



STORM PATH

OIL | 9 X 12 INCHES

For Domaszewski, there is no real line between her painting and teaching. It seems she is constantly educating, even if she's alone in her studio. She approaches her work as a dialogue, a flow of give and take with the canvas, as if she is teaching herself the way forward.

Approaching the large piece she's working on in her studio, Domaszewski arcs her brush, revealing form. The colors swell against salmon-pink undertones. She goes back to her palette to load up on a bit of paint — blue mixed with white — and then slides the thin edge of the brush across the horizon line. With a bit of white this time, the edge of a waterway begins to take shape.

Above her canvas she keeps a photo of a summer sunset reflected in an oncoming thunderhead. This is the inspiration for the piece, but not a photograph to copy. "It's a starting point for me," she says. "As I paint, I let the work tell me where it needs to go."

Her movements in front of the canvas are graceful, mesmerizing. As the colors go on, the shapes begin to form. Perhaps it is this performance-like presence that makes her a perfect artist for onsite residencies, like the one she did



last summer at the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument for its 20th anniversary Artist in Residence program, and the Escalante Canyons Art Festival in Southern Utah.

Art collector Lucinda Young owns four of Domaszewski's

TO THE SOURCE
OIL | 24 X 66 INCHES

pieces, and has known her since the 1980s when they both lived on Nantucket Island.

Young appreciates Domaszewski's ability to convey the aesthetic of place.

"Wherever she immerses and applies her creative spirit, whether it be in Montana or the Southwest, Nantucket or Italy — all places I've also spent time in — her resulting works of art enhance my own memories of those places," Young says. "Especially as a Nantucketer passionate about the island's natural beauty, the way she captures the special quality of the air, light, and weather mesmerizes me, and taps into some undefinable yet deep spiritual connection I feel here when out in the landscape."

There is some abstraction in Domaszewski's work, in the currents, the flow of water, and even in the way she incorporates an almost tactile nature of the atmosphere into the painting. "In my view, Loretta's artistic journey, her fascination with what she sees, and how she transforms that into the shared vision of a painting, consistently transcends that elusive boundary between nature and art," Young says. "Her journey, as I see it portrayed in her painting, is one of fascination and wonder. Her gift is in sharing that wonder." ▲

*Freelance writer and author Michele Corriel loves delving into the creative process in whatever form it takes. Widely published, her work can be read in dozens of magazines across the country. Her fourth book for young adults, *Membrane* (Leap Books), is available everywhere.*



GLORY
OIL | 20 X 16 INCHES

