

# Color Her Natural

by Kathleen McMillen

**B**ARBARA WELDON HAS ALWAYS BEEN PERFECTLY CLEAR ABOUT WHAT turns her on. She loves to create art and she does an absolutely wonderful job of it. Soft spoken and passionate about her work, she is insatiably curious and never allows preconceptions to limit her experience or options.

Even as a very young child, Barbara loved to draw and do watercolors. During high school, she was torn between math and art. When it came time for college, her mother, who had been widowed early, prevailed upon her to study education so she could always support herself. Barbara's degree from San Diego State University is in education and art history, but she also attended every art class she could fit into her curriculum.

One year of teaching grammar school left her more determined than ever to follow her heart. Even though her now-grown children, Laura and Scott, were still small, she pursued her career as a serious artist. She turned down several teaching opportunities, saying, "I wanted to do, not teach, and I knew I'd never have time for my own work if I was teaching."



Starting with watercolors because she had always loved their subtly and delicacy, Barbara couldn't resist experimenting with different materials and ideas. She became proficient at printmaking, collage, and painting by taking 'how-to' classes and seminars at the University of California at San Diego. Along the way she also picked up a lot of the 'why' and 'what,' especially from Eleanor Anton, who taught her collage and shared Barbara's passion for Robert Rauschenberg's work.



*Clockwise from top left:*

*"Myth of Flora" 60" x 60"*

*Oil, wax, gold leaf on canvas*

*"Transitions II" 46" x 32"*

*Oil, wax, gold leaf on canvas*

*"Birds IV" 40" x 40"*

*Oil, wax, gold leaf on canvas*

*"Transitions I" 40" x 40"*

*Oil, wax, gold leaf on canvas*

## Artist Profile

Even early on, Barbara received encouraging recognition for her artistry. She never underestimates herself or the quality of her work. A professional artist, she has always taken what she does seriously. She has never followed the style of the day or the colors that were 'in.' Other than 'elegant,' she doesn't have a style, nor do materials limit her. She is inspired by everything around her, and her work flows from one inspiration and body of work to another. These days she prefers working with oil on canvas and encaustic on canvas or paper. Her work is very textural and she often includes metal foil as a subtle accent.

Barbara's work is thought provoking and beautiful, never severe or somber. Like music, paintings often tell a story, and, sadly, sometimes an explanation is necessary to make the work complete. Barbara's art can easily be appreciated for its beauty alone, yet there is always a deep sense of the substance behind the beauty. It is her gentle but very profound way of creating powerful art that has tremendous presence.

An avid traveler, Barbara has been to Europe many times with France, Italy, and England being her favorite places to visit. She has also been to Germany, Australia, Bali, Singapore, Bangkok, New Zealand, Australia and Kenya. Her home/studio is filled with antiquities and art. She has surrounded herself with wonderful objects that remind her of where she has been and the people who live in those places. "I am like a great big sponge, I just absorb everything around me. When traveling to other countries, seeing other cultures, I am changed for the better by what I see and for the experience. I am like a computer, I just download constantly," says Barbara. It's not just her mind that is open, her senses are open and she takes in everything around her. She absorbs the substance of a place as well as the fine details of what she has seen there. With her collection of objects, each showing the workmanship of another artist, she has created the atmosphere of a multi-cultural museum. This gracious environment is reflected in her work and how she lives her life.

In June 2002, Barbara was diagnosed with Multiple Myeloma. Her complete remission required a positive attitude and dramatic treatments, which could only be performed at the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences in Little Rock. For the

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past year and a half she has been traveling to Little Rock, sometimes staying for as long as two months. She is completely healthy now, painting every day and busy pulling her new show together.

Barbara isn't exactly sure how this experience has affected her work because it was already becoming more organic. Previously much of her work had an architectural structure, but now the images are strictly organic with vines providing the structure for the leaves, butterflies and birds that fill the canvas. Her work no longer reflects anything that is man-made.

When she travels to Little Rock, she often stays at the Peabody Hotel, which also has hotels in Orlando and Memphis. These hotels are famous for having ducks that spend their days swimming in the lobby fountains. One day, she happened to pick up their in-house magazine where she spied an article about their collection of 'distinguished artists'. Much to her pleasure, there she was, listed along with Ed Moses, Joseph Rafael, and David Hockney—very good company indeed.

Soon, Barbara expects to be traveling again and is especially looking forward to returning to France. Her social, cultural, and sporting calendars are filling up as her strength improves. A passionate tennis player, she is hoping her skills have held up. And, of course, she always enjoys being 'Grandma' to Troy, her three-year-old grandson who, she is proud to say, has inherited her imagination.

With her work in many major private and corporate collections, as well as museums in San Diego and around the country, Barbara is delighted to be represented by Jose Tasende. Not only is he a respected 'blue chip' dealer but he and his staff are wonderful to work with and always perfectly professional. In La Jolla, Tasende Gallery has a wide selection of her work. The gallery is located at 820 Prospect Street, (858) 454-3691. You are invited to a reception for her current work, "Wings, Vines, Gardens" on Saturday, November 6, 2004, from 6 to 8 p.m. at Tasende Gallery, 8808 Melrose Avenue, West Hollywood, (310) 276-8686. □

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