

Coqs et Coquettes

I started painting about six years ago to honor my wedding shoes. I had gotten divorced and it was time to let them go. I took out paper and colored pencils, and so it began. Since that evening, I have explored painting in waves of passion – first shoes, then birds.

About five years ago, through learning about the treatment of animals for food and through a growing commitment to ahimsa (non-harming), I became a vegetarian. That, coupled with my deeply-felt love for birds, led me to get a clutch of chicks. I liked the idea of experiencing bonding with animals who are so dissimilar from us, and, unlike cats and dogs, feel relatively foreign. With their toes, wings, beaks, and general skittishness, one does not quite know how to pick them up or what to do with them.

Not long after getting my chicks I started painting them. I was intrigued by their fantastic color, their personalities, and their very individual way of being, looking, and relating to others. I doted on them and grew to love them in little ways – the warmth of their waddles, the coolness of their toes, the uniqueness of their crests. Out of my original flock of 27 I have painted most; some are more photogenic and happier to be photographed. Clearly, the roosters have been the highlight with their eccentricity, flare and distinct personalities.

I love painting as an expression of what I see of the world. It is, for me, an act of meditation and contemplation – not to mention that I rarely have as much fun doing anything else. I continue to paint roosters and chicks because they are artistically challenging, but mostly because I believe they have an inner world. I honor them by painting them – not eating them – and showing their dignity, fear, and love.

I paint my large paintings on butcher paper. I paint my small paintings on canvas since paper would be impractical. I paint or finger paint – or a combination of the two – with oils and oil sticks.

My painting as a personal manifestation of my love for the natural world dovetails with my work as founder and creator of The Terra Project, educational programs for children that use food to teach academic disciplines and explore social justice and environmental issues, including the real impact of our choices on the world at large. My first program, Terra Summer, is located in Asheville, North Carolina; others are in development in Charleston, and I hope, Italy, which is where I am from.

I grew up in a little town in Tuscany. I am a graduate of Yale University and Columbia University. I have lived in Charleston SC a breath short of 20 years.