

Michelle Sakhai

Foreword:

It is impossible for an artist to separate their life, its influences, and the art they produce. As an artist evolves so must their work. As the soul of the artist comes to life so does the authentic voice of the artist. This bound collection communicates the evolution of Michelle's life, education, process, personal growth, and spiritual journey.

Originally Michelle's European studies had encompassed 'plein-air' painting beginning in her home town of Long Island, New York, and later in her travel studies to California, Spain, Italy, and the South of France.

"I originally considered myself a landscape painter. As I evolved, a unique fusion of the varied influences in my early life gave birth to the direction of my work."

Michelle became a true colorist after having an extensive understanding of the movement of light throughout nature and landscape.

Michelle's love of her chosen medium and genre ripened. She was content. As a skilled artist Michelle expected to remain comfortable with traditional expression. Eventually the limitations of her formal training became restricting. Soon an inner longing for expansion profoundly changed the direction of her work.

Completing her Masters in San Francisco, she gradually shifted and embraced abstract expressionism.

"It has been so liberating to become an abstract painter. I don't have to make anything look like anything or give it a name. Energy flows onto the canvas, emotion takes a unique form. My process feels unbounded, limitless. I have discovered that in this place I am working at a soul level. There is no duality. Prior to this shift, I did not know that such artistic freedom was possible."

At the academy in San Francisco and prior to, Michelle had avoided all classes in abstraction. She never expected to deviate from her formal teachings and her landscape expression.

"I would not have predicted that I would become an abstract painter, ever."

Despite her initial outer resistance Michelle's inner life longed for a new voice. Following her graduation, her new vision developed.

"I began painting loose abstract images of the sky. It just poured out of me. I didn't know where it was coming from, but the new work took on a life of its own! I was the channel directed from within. Now, looking back, it all comes together. This series was the perfect bridge between figurative and non-figurative painting. I was making an inner transition and it was being reflected through the expanse of the sky.

My paintings were all images of the sky, and movement of clouds, which appear to be slow but, are swiftly changing. The openness and vast space – like an inner reflection of our physical bodies and consciousness – found in the sky was important in my work. I added

metal leafing; specs of gold and silver leaf, which conveyed what I see and feel when I look between the clouds and space.

I exhibited the sky series at Soma Arts in San Francisco. I remember not knowing what to call this series. Days before the opening 'Awakening' came to me: It fit."

Today Michelle is content in her evolution as an abstract painter. Her formal education is a support for each piece she creates today. Perhaps not in form, but in feeling and a solid method is her foundation.

As a child Michelle traveled the world. An experience that influenced her developing vision. Her maternal Japanese and paternal Persian cultures and world travels encouraged the artist she would become. Throughout her childhood Michelle summered in Japan visiting her maternal grandparents. The coastal landscape of Niigata, the Black Sea and mountains inspired the coming artist. Michelle was captivated with the depth and simplicity of Japanese art.

"Both cultures – Japanese and Persian – were quite different from each other but equally impactful. I have always felt like a citizen of the world and considered myself International. I am so grateful to have both the vibrancy and individuality of both cultures in addition to being an American."

Michelle first put brush to paper exploring watercolor at age six. By thirteen she moved to oils. She recalls this first jump, that also feels like her adult shift from figurative painting to abstract expressionism.

An earlier series that Michelle enjoyed creating was called 'Japanese Translations.' The exhibit traveled within the Bay Area.

"I re-worked the essence of well-known Japanese Ukiyo-e woodblock prints. Following my inner vision I redesigned each block into a large-scale oil painting combined with metal leaf. It was an enjoyable process to blend the old and new. I exhibited and shared my process to audiences including the Japanese Consulate of San Francisco and the San Francisco Public library.

Michelle's exploration of Japanese art and classical landscape training forms a solid foundation for today's free-flowing and continually evolving abstract expression.

Over time Michelle's spiritual journey and her artistic education have progressed. Today the forces within the artist and the soul have melded into a living voice on each canvas. Michelle's expression has dramatically turned inward.

"Painting from a soul level there is no right or wrong ... each expression just is."

Abstract expressionism became an organic healing choice for Michelle's inner landscape to express itself. Michelle describes moving from figurative to abstract expressionism as being equivalent to shifting from an ego voice to allowing her soul to speak. A process that Michelle describes as; "Spiritually and personally fulfilling."

"I believe that art offers healing. Both to the artist and each viewer."

"When I connect with a deeper part within myself as I paint, I believe that this translates to those who enjoy my work. My hope is that each viewer connects with their own inner consciousness as a result of experiencing my process. Art offers connection. My goal – with each encounter – is to connect on a deep level."

The healing properties expressed in authentic art forms are commonly known. Healing requires communication between the viewer and the artist. When a deep emotion is provoked in the viewer a connection is made. In that moment the viewer is feeling what the artist felt while painting. Connection dissolves the ego pain of separation. For a moment separation has been dissolved. And we are one.