

Biography

Marietta Patricia Leis

Leis is a second-generation Italian-American. Her mother's parents came to America from the Naples area and lived in Newark, NJ where they met and married. This family forged a deep and lasting influence in Leis' life and work. Her grandfather Roberto Rosino Napoliello was a man of words, a poet and debater par excellence. Ermelinda Fiore, her grandmother was a gardener and cook of beauty and grace with her domain full of color and scents. Leis' mother Marietta Roma Napoliello, attended Arts High School in Newark, NJ then a subsidiary of the Newark Museum and later the Art Student's League in New York City where she studied commercial design. It was a rich heritage

Marietta Patricia Leis grew up in New Jersey studying ballet and dancing, performing professionally while still in high school. After high school she moved to New York City where she worked and continued the study of drawing and painting that began in her childhood. Leis had a penchant for the 'beatnik' life, performing and exhibiting in the avant garde off Broadway venues of the East Village.

When Marietta married a fellow actor they made Los Angeles their base and had two children before divorcing. During this period Leis pursued her artwork and also secured an undergraduate and graduate degree in psychology. She became a psychotherapist in a large clinic while studying art at the University of California, LA, Otis/Parsons and Santa Monica Community College.

As Leis' desire to focus on painting became more apparent she moved to Albuquerque, NM where she received her MA and MFA in studio art at the University of New Mexico. She worked as an instructor in the Continuing Education Department for the next decade while continuing to build her impressive artist resume.

Leis was the recipient of The E.D. Foundation's artist grant in 1994, 1995 and 1996. These grants funded the Marietta Robusti Tintoretto Story, which toured for three years following its premiere at the Jonson Gallery at the University of New Mexico in the fall of 1996. She has also received a grant from Artist Space, NYC, and was awarded artist residencies at Connamara Conservancy, Dallas, Weir Farm Trust, CT., Schneider Museum/Crater Lake, OR. Fundacion Valpariso, Mojacar, Spain, Cawdor Estate, Cawdor, Scotland, Spring Island, S.C., Pritchard's Island, SC., Footsteps to Creativity, Portugal and others.

Among the places that Leis' work has been exhibited are the Museo Italo Americano, San Francisco; Pindar Gallery, Soho NYC; The Clymer Museum, Ellensburg, Washington; Holter Museum, Helena, Montana; Harwood Museum, NM; Islip Art Museum, Long Island; and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Fort Collins, CO.

Leis' work can be found in many public collections among them: The Albuquerque Art Museum

Building, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Her work in the public sector includes commissioned work and 1% for the Arts competitions.

Leis' extensive exhibition record as well as collections that she is in, awards that she has received and lectures that she has given is documented in *Who's Who In American Art* (24th Edition, 2008-2009, R.R. Bowker, A Reed Reference). Her website is www.mariettaeis.com.

New York Times Contributing Art Critic, William Zimmer, called Leis' current abstract paintings "sublime". In regard to her own philosophy regarding her work Leis states, "Art stretches ones mind and vision. It helps people to comprehend the inexplicable and to aspire to live life at a aesthetic level of consciousness." Her intention in her art is to evoke a sensory—visceral response, "The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things but their inward significance."

Many things including architecture, literature, fashion design, history and especially traveling, which she has done extensively, influence Leis' work. Italy is a primary influence and she has visited 7 times doing an Artist Residency there in October 2008. "My first magical visit to Italy occurred in 1979 when I visited Venice, Florence, Rome and Pompeii. In that visit I experienced a feeling of being 'home.' A sense of belonging and knowingness that ascended from the recesses of my childhood experiences growing up in the context of Italian culture."

"The museums echoed the sensibilities of the Metropolitan Museum, NYC where I visited on an almost daily basis in my early adulthood when I lived down the street. The art, sculpture, architecture, gardens and fountains resonated the art history books that I had studied." Leis' visits gave her an experience of the comfortable—not contrived—attention to detail, color and sensuality that pervaded the environment. When she returned home her abstract paintings with fractured forms of architecture and flowers, of color and baroque abundance called, *Mosaics*, reflected the influence of her visit.

In 1985 Leis returned to Italy spending a month in Umbria but also going to Florence, Sienna, and Orvieto. This immersion resulted in, *Illuminations*, a series of abstract paintings that used the format of illuminated manuscripts

In 1987, Leis traveled through Italy for 6 months spending three of those months studying Italian in Perugia while taking overnight trips. She was intrigued by the Arte Povera artists and went to Turin, Rome and Todi to meet some of those renowned artists. Later she traveled to Sicily on the advice of the Italian artist, Alghero Boetti to see it's raw and electrifying beauty. Leis' art after this visit turned to common textural materials, constructions, charcoal drawings and mixed media with the themes of abstract houses, doors and windows.

In 1996, Leis returned to Italy on an extended tour spanning North from Milan to the Almalfi Coast. She spent time in Venice and Florence to research the life of Marietta Robusti Tintoretto for the grant she had been awarded to do a traveling exhibition on Tintoretto's life and work.

Leis' abstract paintings since 2001 have grown progressively reductive and more monochromatic as she pares down her issues to their essence. They are about breath, contained energy, stillness and aloneness. Leis tries to seduce the viewer, by the opulence of the surfaces, into allowing the viewer the time and space to contemplate the work. The deeper one goes the more layers are revealed. It is antithetical to our everyday life to slow down but Leis attempts to do this in the process of making these paintings.

Leis now focuses more on space or 'atmosphere' than the actual forms in her painting. The formats that she uses whether wood or stretcher bar and canvas are, however, are very much concerned with form—pyramids, squares, rectangles and boxes. The traditional painting medium and the lushness of the paint most decidedly call up recollections of the past while the contemporary shaped formats address present concerns of object-ness. What interests Leis most about this work is the harmonious way these elements work together. It is finding that balance that intrigues the viewer as well.

Leis doesn't focus on sociological meaning or symbolism when making her work. She's happily entrenched in the formal techniques of painting—color, edge, space, form and composition. She uses these elements to express her own visceral responses to life.

Marietta tries to schedule her career so that she can accept one Artist Residency a year and has been able to spend time in Portugal, Spain, Scotland as well as South Carolina, Connecticut and Oregon. Her other travels include China, Egypt, Japan, Greece, France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland and she has been in all 50 US states.

Marietta continues to work in New Mexico where she lives with her husband, David Vogel. She has two children and one grandchild.