

MARIETTA PATRICIA LEIS

SHADES

SHADES encompasses two series of my paintings, *Insights* and *Pixels*. Both series were inspired by my silent, still, and reverent observation of either the changing sea or sky around me. While in artist residencies by Italy's Tyrrhenian Sea or in Finland's Arctic Circle I resisted intelligence and was present in the natural world, learning about it up close, right here, right now. This softened the imaginary line between nature and me. The resulting paintings also softened, became reductive, sensory memories capturing my feelings rather than the details.

The sheer wonder of the world around me without the interfering static of everyday noise influenced my work, helping me to sense the day's moods and nuances that would have been missed in a usual day's 'attention blink'. Tapping into this undercurrent of knowledge is what my art is about. I use these elements to express my own visceral responses to life and to evoke those of the viewer.

My life has taken a deliberate turn in the last decade—more focused—intrigued by empty space, interested in the air between the notes. Working in my studio suits my need for the contemplative solitude my paintings require. Paradoxically, I am also a traveler with much curiosity about the world. Exposure to unfamiliar places challenges my perceptions, expands my ideas, and ultimately informs my life and my work.

Finland's weather of fog, mist, rain, and cloud masses can all occur in a summer's 24-hour lit day. The northern sky's light is infused with a translucent clearness that made me feel as though I could step through any barrier, and into the universe itself. Looking from my studio window when the sun winked, the sky would respond with wondrous shades of lemony yellows and pinks.

Italy's southern coast, in contrast, had vibrancy and high drama. The days were pregnant with every blue color value and the nights were black velvet. The sea's beauty could be both tumultuous and soft as cashmere, fascinating me from my studio or as I walked in the complimentary sands.

I dipped my brush into my soul and painted what cannot be said verbally. I used the glazes in the paintings for the pure translucency of the skies, the gradations for the subtle nuances of color that shifted continuously, and the bold contrasts and marks for nature's spontaneous surprises. The sensuous spirit of my travels returned home with me in my work and in my heart.