

Candice Chovanec

Keeping it real



▲ *Teresita*, oil, 24 x 18.

◀ *My Mother and Her Daughter*, oil, 36 x 48.

AS A YOUNG artist growing up in Southern California, Candice Chovanec found herself both spellbound and inspired by the detailed paintings of photo-realists like Chuck Close and Richard Estes. Especially drawn to portraiture, the burgeoning realist fueled her creative interests at Laguna College of Art and Design, where she studied traditional methods of drawing and painting. Yet, she then challenged her artistic sensibilities by enrolling in a “more conceptual” master’s program in fine art at California State University, Fullerton. “That was eye-opening, because it steered me to understand that I’m a very particular kind of artist,” she says now. “Abstract painting ... I just don’t think about art that way.”

Now firmly rooted in contemporary realism, Chovanec teaches art at a college near her home in Grand Rapids, MI. She spends much of her remaining time in her studio creating figurative works that are garnering increasing recogni-

tion. Recently the artist snagged a first-place award in the Portrait Society of America’s members-only competition for *TERESITA*, a portrait Chovanec painted from photographs she snapped of her graduate-school friend one bright, hot day in La Habra, CA. The direct sunlight, coupled with *Teresita*’s yellow scarf and turquoise shirt, provided the artist with the perfect opportunity to “push” color. “I really enjoy trying to get the most vibrant color I can with it still looking like realism,” explains Chovanec.

In *TERESITA*, for example, the artist’s application of “accurate, cool colors” to the shadow areas amplifies the warm, high-chroma areas lit by the sun. Striking such a color-temperature balance comes with practice, notes Chovanec, who frequently paints landscapes *en plein air* to perfect her eye for “mixing chromatic and accurate color.” She also paints from life when completing small-scale portraits. But for her larger works, which can reach life-size proportions,

Chovanec shoots reference photographs of her models with specific goals in mind. In one such portrait, she portrays the familial bond between her mother and sister, who sit shoulder to shoulder and project the same relaxed posture. But the artist also wanted the painting to convey her mother’s inherent strength as a parent and home-health-care professional. “Even when I’m photographing someone, I’m composing from the start,” she says. “Best-case scenario, I get a great photo that gives me a ton of information, the color is interesting, and everything just aligns.” —*Kim Agricola*

representation

www.candicechovanec.com

upcoming show

Group show: Reclamation, **Helen Day Art Center**, Stowe, VT, July 15-August 25.