

## CINDY REVELL FINDING THE WHIMSY

A sinuous, glowing orange and black spotted cat lounges elegantly on a stool. The cat's expressive eyes gaze at a cheeky red bird, there is a connection between them. Vibrantly coloured flowers and leaves move through a background which is an energetic swirl of thick oil paint. The painting is alive with mystery, hinting at 'what if' and anything is possible'

Cindy Revell's vividly coloured oil paintings are created in a sunny studio where a shrimpy, personable mutt and ancient cat keep her company and provide inspiration. Revell and her talented husband who can build or fix anything live in the countryside outside of Sherwood Park, Alberta. While art is a major focus in Revell's life chickens, gardening and camping keep her happily engaged with nature. Reading has been a part of her daily life since she was a child and is the way she



Early Painting, age 6,



Indulgence, 24x18, Oil on Canvas



Gary Funk, ArtsQuest

ends every day. "A bubble bath or camping is when I best love to indulge myself in books. I can read in the tub or in front of a campfire for an amazing number of hours."

Revell's chickens and flower and vegetable gardens are a reminder of growing up on a farm in Carrot River, Saskatchewan where she was a dreamer with time on her hands. Along with her sister and brother who nicknamed her Bird she built forts, tree houses and swam in the nearby river. Revell spent long hours reading, drawing, playing her guitar and singing. And how she loved her farm cats, one of her first words being 'Kee' for kitty.

Her artistic talents were noted by her teachers and family, in particular her creative mother who sewed, gardened and kept a pretty home and her talented aunt who had worked for a time as a sign painter. Besides the typical grade school and high school art classes her one exposure to an art show was a horticultural show in a nearby town where Revell won a blue ribbon for her charcoal drawing of a cat. In spite of the lack of artistic culture in her home town a life involving art was in the making.

After a few detours Revell took took Environmental Graphic Design at Grant MacEwan University. It was a magical and inspiring time for Revell as she learned about art history, design and illustration. A love of the old masters was born and she knew that art was a world in which she belonged. After college Revell worked as a graphic designer and illustrator during which time she developed a whimsical and simple style using scratchboard. It would strongly influence her future work.



*Jeremiah, 12x12, Oil on Canvas*

Craving independence and greater opportunities to use her imagination she went on to become an award winning freelance illustrator creating whimsical illustrations in acrylic as well as scratchboard and watercolour. Revell's brightly coloured expressive work brought life to bill boards, wine bottles, CD covers, magazines, cook books, the popular Mom's Plan-It Calendar, furniture and numerous children's books across North America. Children's books are magical creations where story and art came together and for this dreamer and lover of books it was a perfect mix. Cats began to creep into her illustration, even in story books when they were not part of the manuscript she often included them. They added a quietly intriguing character to the stories.

But life is never static and change was coming. Revell began oil painting as a way to invigorate her illustration work and in doing so her interest in the old masters and her love of realism was rekindled. She began painting realistic still lifes full of glowing light and the rich warm

palette that was such a key part of her illustration. It was at this time that a gallery owner asked Revell if she would do an exhibit of her illustration. She was extremely busy with her work and oil painting and the timing didn't seem right, in addition she felt that her small acrylic illustrations would not make a suitable show. But a seed was planted and the idea never completely left.

One winter as Revell was exploring a much freer and juicier way of painting that early seed sprouted. It occurred to her that she could do a loose and lively oil painting in her whimsical illustration style. She painted a cat to try out this new idea and everything changed that day.

Revell's focus turned to this new and invigorating approach which united her love of oils, a more free and energetic way of painting and her favourite subject matter: cats, animals, birds, pattern and flowers. Her characters are placed in gardens, interiors and her beloved still lifes. Revell is intrigued by the sleek elegance of cats, their goofy charm and their mercurial character. While they are often featured in Revell's work they are not the only characters. A menagerie of uncommonly coloured creatures symbolize trusting in and being yourself. They are a celebration of the uniqueness in each person. Often they are creatures that are not usually found together but in placing them in her paintings they suggest the connection between all living things. We are different from one another with our own stories and paths to take yet interdependent and connected as suggested by the tête-a-têtes between the



*Sojourn, 30x36, Oil on Canvas*



*Romeo, 30x36, Oil on Canvas*

animals. The paintings have their own underlying meaning but contain a hint of mystery allowing the viewer to place his/her own meaning to the painting.

Inspiration comes from simple things, spotted horses in a pasture, the fuchsia of cosmos, the flash of the red winged black birds that live near her pond. The naivete of folk art, the patterns of Friedensreich Hundertwasser and the simplicity of Henri Rousseau and their unrealistic way of depicting their worlds made Revell realize that she could be as fanciful as she wished.

Over the years Revell's evolving work has been in a great many shows but there are some that have stood out for her because of high caliber of artists that she was showing with, gripping subject matter and personal accomplishment. Some special events are: The Best of Realism, Winstanley-Roark Fine Art, Cape Cod, MA, Contemporary Realism, Trudy Labell Fine Arts, Naples, FL, Success, Federation of Canadian Artists, Vancouver, BC, The New Reality, Smith Kramer Travelling Museum Exhibition, USA, Tell Us A Story, Segil Fine Art, Old Town Monrovia, CA, Project Heroes, Travelling Exhibition, Canada, and Be Your Own Bird: Solo show, Daffodil Gallery, Edmonton, AB. Revell and her work have been featured in numerous newspaper articles and published in many magazines.

*"... It has such a vibrant and life-affirming quality to it, it reminds me there still is wonder in the world and reason for optimism."*

*JM, Client, Toronto, ON*

Revell was honoured with a nomination for a Governor General's award for illustration early in her career and has received numerous awards recognizing both her illustration and oil painting. She is a member of The Oil Painters of America and a signature member of The Federation of Canadian Artists (AFCA). She is represented by Deborah Wolfe Ltd, Philadelphia, PA, Lando Gallery, Edmonton, AB and Candler Art Gallery, Camrose, AB.

Today you will still find Revell dreaming, thinking 'what if' and 'anything is possible' as she creates magical worlds in paint. While she is serenaded by bird song coming through the delightfully squeaky screen door of her studio she is reminded of our magnificent individuality within the great connection of all life and tries to get a little bit of that in each painting.



*Indulgence, 30x24, Oil on Canvas*