

| SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA'S GRACE SCHLESIER

Virtual Genius



above: Grace Schlesier painting in Rocky Mountain National Park last June.

below: Cover image, *Return of the Swallows*, shown in its entirety.

Grace Schlesier, the artist responsible for this magazine's cover painting, *Return of the Swallows*, has a long history painting California's signature sites. The native New Yorker was a young wife and mother with a strong affinity for art when she visited San Diego with her husband in 1960. "It was like magic," she remembered. "We just fell in love with the place." Two years later the family moved to the Golden State for good.

Despite the demands of an active household, art remained a prominent part of her life. "When the kids were little, I did a lot of pastels and pencils because it was difficult to use oils with them running around. For a while I had my easel set up in the kitchen. Then I moved it into our bedroom. I'd stay up half the night painting and my husband, Bob, would sleep with all the lights on."

Encouraged by Bob, she attended the Scottsdale Artists School, read art magazines, and soon began earning awards for her renditions of the California landscapes around her home in La Mesa, a quiet community 17 miles inland from downtown San Diego.

Her diligence paid off. "I was fortunate. I never had to search for galleries. They seemed to come to me." Her work is displayed throughout the U.S., and she spends much of her time traveling to major art exhibits. In addition to what she terms "brick and mortar shows," her work is displayed virtually online. "About 12 years ago the National Academy of Professional Plein Air Painters began so we could discuss techniques, places to paint and just share." The virtual exhibits developed from their cyber-rapport. "Three years ago we did our first show at the Manhattan Arts Center. Now, we're getting ready for one at the Texas Art Gallery in Dallas." Each exhibit is followed with an online version.

Far-flung locales—Telluride, Tahiti and the capitals of Europe—make their way into her portfolio. However, Grace Schlesier continues her love affair with her adopted state. "I still go

out on location in out-of-the-way places. Bob is so good. He'll take a book and wait in the car while I paint. The Mission (at San Juan Capistrano) is about an hour from my house. I try to get there about once a month to paint plein-air.

Many of her larger pieces are created from photos or small studies done on location. *Return of the Swallows*, an 18" x 24" oil on linen was completed in the studio adjacent to her home. Schlesier explained that she "opened up" the image and enhanced it by adding the famed swallows. She also included the less-celebrated doves. "There are so many of them there," she explained with a laugh. "I think a lot of people think they *are* the swallows."

For more information about the artist and her work, visit www.artgallery.bz ■

