



Country Girl, oil, 10" by 8"

"Country girl was inspired by my daughter Rachel, who has a renaissance quality about her skin and features that make her my favorite model."



Summer Creek, oil, 16" by 20"

"Summer Creek is a subject I continue to paint all the time, as I have lived for the past 22 years in the back bay in Newport Beach, California. I cannot forget a quote from Monet: 'Everything I want to paint is within two miles of my home.' I have traveled extensively throughout my life and now reside in the most beautiful place."

PAINTERLY CONVERSATIONS

By Emily Van Cleve

The garden around Jacqueline Kamin's southern California home is a sanctuary for all kinds of flowers and herbs. She is proud of the hydrangea, lavender, and rosemary plants that thrive under her watchful eye, but her heart belongs to her roses. "I love so many different kinds of roses," she says. "I have quite a few varieties of heirloom roses growing in my garden."

Some of Kamin's most special garden plants and ones that she buys at floral shops serve as models for the still life oil paintings she creates on

canvas and board. They often share a scene with bowls, pitchers, and an array of interesting objects she has discovered at antique stores and yard sales.

"In still life paintings, I create an environment and bring the viewer into my world," Kamin says. "When I'm setting up a scene, I select something that really appeals to me and find other things that look good with it. I don't think about what the object actually is when deciding what other objects I should place around it. I consider the texture and surface

of an object and how that surface carries light. My goal is to lead the viewer through the painting. I want to engage in an interesting conversation with the viewer."

Art has been at the center of Kamin's life since early childhood. As a child, she made her own toys and paper dolls. Her father, who was head of design and promotion for a large liquor distributor, brought art materials home with him from the office on a regular basis. Kamin delighted in the fabrics, ribbons, crepe paper, and other supplies that



Evening Calm, oil, 16" by 20"

"This is a painting about that magical hour that has inspired artists to come to California for the last century. I am no exception. The light, the trees, mountains, hills, lakes, streams are all amazing and never cease to excite me."

she transformed into all kinds of toys.

Few adult artists still own artworks made during elementary school, but Kamin can see one of her early creations by visiting J. Enos Ray Elementary School in Prince George's Country, Maryland. When she was in the third grade, she was asked to make a mural on one of the school's long walls. To the best of Kamin's knowledge, the mural, which portrays children joyfully sleigh riding and playing in the snow, is still in tact.

"As a kid, I knew I would do art when I grew up," she says. "By the time I was in high school, I thought I would be a medical illustrator. I was inspired by my sister's husband, who is a surgeon."

After graduating from high school,

Kamin enrolled at the University of Maryland to study art. She also received a scholarship to study at the Corcoran Museum School in Washington, D. C., which is associated with the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Classes at the university left her feeling uninspired, while the museum school offerings were very stimulating.

"At the time, in the late 1960s, it was all about abstract art in painting," Kamin says. "I wasn't interested in abstract art, but I took life drawing classes at the university. I was much happier at the Corcoran Museum School. There I was surrounded by wonderful art, including a collection of works by Sargent, while I sculpted, painted, and drew."

Art took a back seat in Kamin's life when, in 1968, at the age of 19, she

married a dental student at the University of Maryland. She discontinued studies at the university and the museum school during her junior year. After her husband earned his degree in dentistry, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and was stationed in Alabama, where the couple's first daughter, Rachel, was born in 1971.

The two years' worth of military service that Kamin and her husband spent in Korea proved to be an artistically exciting experience. "Every military base has an art center," she says. "I was able to go to the art center every day because military wives were provided with child care. I painted still life and sculpted a lot in Korea. It was a period of self-exploration and experimentation. I had a wonderful time."

Upon completion of military ser-



Copper & Roses, oil, 12" by 12"

"The white iceberg roses in this painting are from my garden, and this particular day it had just rained on them, making them ripe to paint as they were hanging in a wonderful, gentle pose. The vessel is one that I purchased in the museum shop in Nanjing, China. I was there two years ago and never had the opportunity to paint it. All things just came together that day, inspiring me to capture the moment."



Armful of Azalea Blossoms, oil, 16" by 20"

"This painting is essentially about cool light and atmosphere. The flowers, fruit, and vessel are all cool, and I was working to create a compelling visual effect."

vice, the couple moved back to the Washington, D. C., area, and Kamin gave birth to her second daughter, Stacy, in 1974. Days were busy taking care of a toddler and a newborn, but certain evenings were reserved for drawing classes.

Kamin's divorce in 1979 meant she had to completely alter her lifestyle and look for work outside the home. "I asked myself what artists do when they need money," she says. "I didn't feel I had a lot of marketable skills. When I filled out job forms and was asked what I do, I said I was a home engineer."

Kamin not only landed on her feet after the divorce, she thrived. She became a successful entrepreneur, opening a chocolate chip cookie company store in a metro station in downtown Washington. "It was the right time and the right place," she says. "I opened another store further down the metro line in Virginia."

By the early 1980s, Kamin owned eight chocolate chip cookie stores, six of them in New York City. Since she had reliable help at all locations,



she was able to spend summers living in an apartment in New York and attending classes at the Art Students League and the Sculptors Studio. Her daughters happily spent their summers at camps outside New York City.

Kamin's life changed dramatically at the end of 1984, when she was fixed up on a blind date with a radiologist from California, who was a colleague of her brother-in-law. Paul Kamin had traveled to Washington to attend a conference and took Kamin out to dinner.

"The date was amazing," Kamin recalls. "We had a whirlwind



Antique Silver, oil, 9" by 14"

"The silver in this painting is one of my favorite things to paint. I love painting simple objects and just creating a soulful environment for them, making them seem more beautiful and compelling than they could possibly be in real life."

relationship. We met before Thanksgiving. Four months later, my daughters and I moved to California to be with him. Paul and I married in 1985."

The move to California marked the beginning of Kamin's career as a professional artist. "A real turning point came when I met [painter] David Leffel," she says. "I initially met him in New York years earlier, but I really don't remember that meeting. We met again in California, when he came to do a workshop. I took the workshop and connected with him right away." Kamin travels to northern California, Colorado, and New Mexico to take workshops with Leffel, who has become a friend, as well as her main mentor.

The move to California also inspired Kamin to start painting en plein air. She delights in California's

beautiful and varied coastal landscape and often paints with fellow members of the California Art Club. Members get together several times a month to work outdoors and on an annual basis to paint Mission San Juan Capistrano.

While Kamin was honing her painting skills in the late '90s, she decided to open her own gallery in Laguna Beach. J. Kamin Fine Art sold her still life paintings and paintings by Russian artists that were part of Kamin's personal collection. The gallery was open for nine years and closed three years ago.

Today, Kamin turns to galleries throughout the country to represent her work. She enjoys entering competitions and in recent years has won First Place in Still Life at the third annual California Autumn Salon and Honorable Mention at the Sights of

Santa Ana Invitational. A member of the Oil Painters of America and the Salmagundi Club, Kamin has taught workshops at the Academy of Figurative Art in Los Angeles and currently teaches at the Scottsdale Artists School, as well as privately in the Newport Beach area.

The newest addition to Kamin's repertoire is portraiture. In April, her daughter Rachel, son-in-law Jeff Galant, and two grandsons moved into the 9,000-square-foot home overlooking the ocean that Kamin shares with Paul. "I have live-in models," she says with delight. "I'm really excited about painting them."

Whether Kamin is painting still life, California landscapes, or portraits, she exudes enthusiasm and complete commitment to her subject. "Painting is part of my being," she says. It's like breathing to me." *AW*

Emily Van Cleve is a writer and painter living in Santa Fe, New Mexico.