

Joan LaRocca



Born in New York City, Joan LaRocca began drawing seriously at age twelve and has been on a creative quest ever since. At age 17, Joan was presented the Alexander Award by the Metropolitan Museum of Art given to the most outstanding art students in New York City.

There is a tradition of art in her family. Her father was an impeccable craftsman whose work can be seen throughout the U.S., including Harry Winston on 5th Avenue in Manhattan. Her grandfather, Andrew Giuliano, carved in wood and Uncle Zachary was an international sculptor and restorer. Joan's brother Frank, is an architect.

Ms. LaRocca received highest honors from the Art Department at N.Y.U. where she completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees. There she came under the tutelage of mentor Hale Woodruff, one of the most renowned African-American artists of this century, who, Ms. LaRocca says, "Encouraged me to paint my own vision, to believe in what I was doing, and to hold to the integrity of my personal expression."

During the early 60's in Greenwich Village, Joan was involved with some of the most influential artists of the abstract expressionist movement. "I struggled to understand what it all meant, and then one day, after hours of painting in the studio at N.Y.U., I got it! The pure joy, power and love of brush and paint expressed by a stroke, in a moment! It was exhilarating and my first successful abstract piece was created: very hard work; I was eighteen. I am not an abstract expressionist, but over these many years my work has evolved and if one looks closely into any small area of my watercolors, that influence can still be seen." When the great American painter, Edwin Dickinson, met Ms. LaRocca at a one-woman exhibition, he personally congratulated her and wrote "Du Premier Coup" (The First Stroke), an honor and acknowledgement she treasures to this day.

Travels, experiences, dreams, exploring various approaches to and philosophies of art, all influenced the development of Ms. LaRocca's work. Although Joan worked effectively in a variety of materials, she focused on watercolor because it seemed the most "natural" medium and enabled her to arrange more complex, detailed, and delicate compositions where space and image could merge... then emerge independently... then merge again.

Because of a dream, Joan made her first journey to the Southwest in 1988. It made quite an impact and suddenly everything seemed to converge. That initial contact changed her vision, her painting and her life. The power of the Earth, Native American culture, the palpable Spirit there, grounded and connected all the pieces to form the whole. This is evident in her work and at the heart of it all was a motif Joan LaRocca had continuously been using since her earliest student days – The Sacred Circle. "Art brings me to the center, but I want each painting to exist independently and to be felt. I want each work to have a life of its own and to speak for itself."

Ms. LaRocca is an artist member of the Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts, the Silvermine Guild of Art, the Connecticut Watercolor Society and Connecticut Women Artists. She continues to have exhibitions throughout the Northeast and Arizona and her work is in numerous private and corporate collections. Joan LaRocca, also a photographer, studied in Sante Fe, N.M.. She was given Honorable Mention for a photograph which is now part of a permanent collection in the Museum of Natural History in New York.