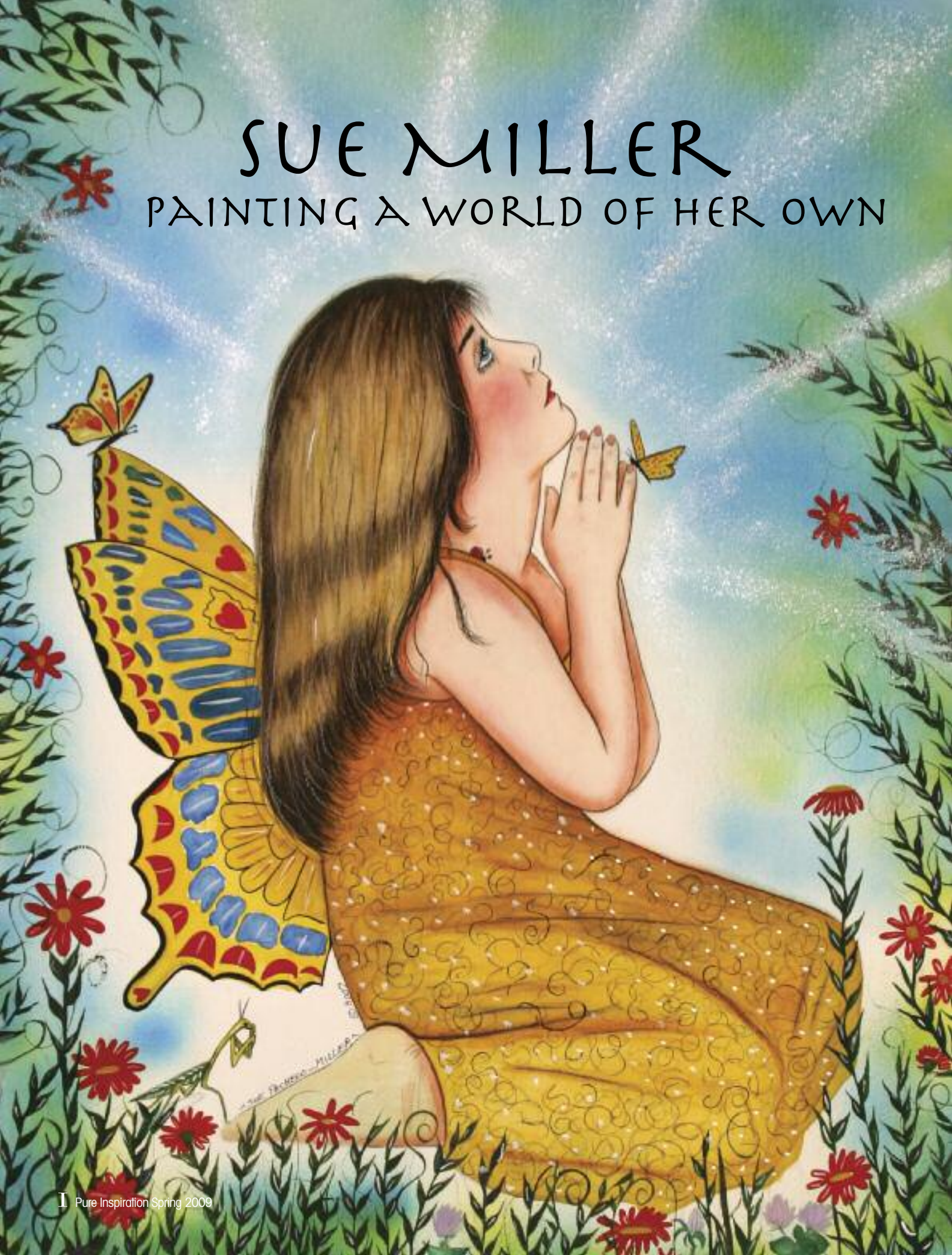


SUE MILLER

PAINTING A WORLD OF HER OWN





Sue with her companion, Autumn

Sue Miller has been painting for most of her life. In fact, she cannot recall a time over the past forty years when she was not working on a painting. Her father, Tony Pacheco, was an accomplished professional artist who she cites as her first teacher: “He taught me how to see, draw, and paint at a very young age.” Sue later studied art at Southeastern Massachusetts University and also took private lessons with other instructors, including New England painter Milton Healey and fashion illustrator Margaret Lachoot. After moving to New Jersey, she studied watercolor with Rachel Farrington, who she considers to be one of her most significant artistic influences, along with her father, Norman Rockwell, and Harrison Fisher.

A CROSSROADS

Eighteen years ago, in the midst of the Gulf War and a sagging economy, Sue received a jolt—she had been working in the field of commercial art for about twenty years and was then the Art Director for a chain of department stores located in New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. However, with computers and outsourcing working their

way into the field of commercial advertising, Sue was told that their Art Department would be closing its doors. This was shortly before Christmas, and to make matters more stressful, she and her husband Vern had just purchased a home in rural northwest New Jersey, making her lost income a pressing matter. This forced Sue to do some serious soul-searching which, in turn, led her to prayer; in fact, she remembers praying almost nonstop in her search for divine guidance. During this period, an important message was given to her in a dream: Several angels and the Holy Mother Mary appeared and told her very clearly that her life was in God’s hands, everything was going to turn out fine, and she “should start painting angels.” So that’s exactly what she did.

Painting angels was a joy, but money was needed for living expenses. Sue also felt the urge to share her knowledge and love of painting with others, and at Vern’s suggestion, she advertised her services as a painting teacher in local publications. Very quickly, Sue found herself with a large group of students. Her Magic Palette Art Studio, located in their home, soon accom-

Good Luck Fairy

She was painted in hopes of bringing good luck to all who view her. With the hard times in the world, I felt it was an important piece to paint. ©2007.

Painted in watercolors on 300 lb. De-Arches paper.

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modated over one hundred and thirty students, ranging in age from four to "senior citizens." As her students observed more and more of her angel paintings adorning the walls, they began giving her figurines and "everything imaginable" relating to angels. She recalls, "With almost one thousand angel figurines, we had to have all kinds of shelves built in our living room, and my husband bought me a large glass cabinet to display many more." Painting angels and working with children led Sue to also become interested in the realm of fantasy, especially painting fairies. She observes, "Seeing the world through the eyes, imagination, and heart of a child gives one a perspective that is pure and innocent, with absolutely no limit to the possibilities."

To this day, Sue continues to teach a large number of students, the majority of whom are children. Her work has also been licensed to quite a few reputable companies, and many of her works have appeared on the covers of books and magazines. The list of her artistic achievements is impressive, yet she remains humble and feels blessed to be doing what she loves—painting and teaching children to paint: "I thank God and the angels for guiding me to and along this path. I never dreamed when my commercial art world crumbled that this door would open for me and such wonderful light would shine in."

SUE'S SOURCES OF INSPIRATION

When asked about her spiritual influences, Sue replied, "God, the angels, and nature—all of nature's creatures, both large and small: flowers, stars, snowflakes, gentle rain, all of nature's wonders, including those little characters in the fairy realm. All these represent balance, joy, and the perfection which teaches us so many important lessons." Sue adores nature and all "its little creatures," and she weaves the spirit of nature into her world of art, which offers her a transcendent form of "escaping" into a magical realm of her own creation:

"I often feel the need to escape the earth-bound existence of world events and suffering, which seems so prevalent in much of today's world; so, I enter this little world which I have designed, where there is hope, happiness, and inspiration, explosions of color, joyful feelings, and pleasant visuals. When I paint, I actually feel as if I disappear from the physical world and enter a kind of



Keeper of the Forest

The forest has a special Fairy/Angel that protects all. ©2006.

Painted with mixed media on 300 lb. De-Arches watercolor paper.

Zen state where all time disappears. This—the realm of angels and fairies—seems to be such a hopeful and inspirational place.”

Again and again, when conversing with Sue, her emphasis returns to her love of nature:

“As I mentioned earlier, flowers, leaves, grass, birds, insects, woodland characters, etc., all make appearances in my artwork. My husband and I live on a lake and many of the little creatures and other elements which are found in my paintings actually live in our yard. We feed the birds and woodland animals to encourage them to stay and share our little paradise with us. We had nine hummingbirds this summer who spent much of their day in our yard, feeding on the sugar water we put in four feeders for them. We feel a very strong sense of kinship and communication with our little friends. A few years ago, our swans (who live on the lake adjacent to our home) had babies and one of them got a fish hook caught in its tongue. The parents brought the baby to our backyard, let us take him from the water, put him in our car, and take him to the vet. After the hook was removed, we brought the baby back to the bottom of our yard and placed him in the water, where his parents were waiting for us to safely return him. It was a big lesson in trust for us, and we were truly honored. We share this planet with so many other lives, and it seems we were all really put here to learn from and help each other.”

While Sue does spend ample time planning her paintings, when she actually sits down to paint, she experiences a very real feeling of letting go to the spontaneous flow which comes through her. She sees this flow as coming from God, who she describes as



The Swan Looking Back

I spent an entire summer following this swan around trying to get the best photos possible, so I could use them as references for my paintings. I just loved this pose. ©1985.

“both a universal source and force, a power much greater than myself where I can rest my unanswered questions and be given inspiration, peace, and guidance. I think working on my art serves as a portal through which I make this connection to a higher power; it’s like I’m transported into this zone where time disappears and I feel like I’m not really painting the work of art;

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rather, it's more like it is painting itself. So it doesn't really feel like work or a task of any kind. I feel like I'm just the messenger between the Source and the watercolor paper. I guess this higher power is what gives me the ability to enter my little world, provides me with inspiration and ideas, and guides my hand while I mix colors and apply them to paper. This is a feeling of wealth that no amount of money can ever buy. I believe that everyone possesses the gift and ability to tap into this power, but unfortunately, some haven't found it yet. An important part of my teaching is trying to help young people discover this ability within themselves—kind of like looking for the switch that turns on the light.”

AN ALL-CONSUMING WORK

Given how Sue feels about painting, it's no wonder that she paints so prolifically and passionately. She takes whatever piece she's currently working on from room to room in the house and studies it continually, even while performing other tasks or lying in bed at night: “I have to live with whatever painting I'm working on at the time. It engulfs my entire being and

takes on a type of omnipresence in my life. It follows me around the house like a puppy waiting for me to give it attention.”

Sue feels blessed to be doing what she loves, and to experience that it's actually that divine flow of energy coming through her which does the work. When you speak with Sue, you know you are in the presence of a happy person, a loving person who really enjoys and appreciates her life. She speaks often and affectionately of her home life with Vern, and of how much she enjoys living and doing her art in such a special setting. She and Vern have just published a new book, *Fantasy Art™*. The book features many of Sue's paintings, as well as Vern's inspirational poems. David Richie of “Fairie's World,” a popular fantasy website, wrote the forward, and the book also has a special gallery section which includes many of today's most popular and beloved fantasy artists.

For more information about Sue, as well as links to her online gift shop and other companies that market her work, go to www.suemillerart.com. If you want to contact Sue directly, you can e-mail her at angelknock@optonline.net.

This article appears in the Spring 2009 issue of Pure Inspiration magazine, which may be purchased at Borders, Barnes & Noble, Sam's Club and other newsstand locations nationwide.



Snow Ballet

This painting was inspired by the beautiful swans on our lake. I spent the first year after we moved here photographing, drawing, and painting the swans...and adorable waterfowl. ©1985.
Painted in watercolors on 300 lb. De-Arches watercolor paper.



The Blue Wizard

This painting was something that just came by itself. I had always wanted to paint wizards, so one year I actually painted a few. ©2005.

Painted with mixed media on 300 lb. De-Arches watercolor paper.

Irish Angel

My beautiful niece posed for this painting. I wanted to do something special for St. Patrick's Day. I love all the holidays and often paint them. ©2004.

Painted in watercolors on 300 lb. De-Arches watercolor paper.

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