

LC Armstrong

Interview with Axia News – Greece

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Axia: On August 7, the exhibition “Island Paintings” opens at the “Bellonio Cultural Foundation” in Santorini. Is this the first time you show your paintings in Greece?

LC: Yes, this will be my first time. I’ve wanted to go visit Greece since college, where I studied the Greek culture, art history, philosophy and mythology.

Axia: How do you feel about your visit and exhibition in Greece?

LC: I’m very excited and thankful for the opportunity. I think it will be a perfect venue for my paintings.

Axia: Talk to us about the 14 paintings, you will present in the exhibition.

LC: The “Island Paintings” were done over a ten-year period. Living in New York, I craved the colors of the sea, especially in winter when it is so grey here. By choosing to paint island locales, I was able to use a high-keyed palette. It seems that some of the greyest places (such as the Netherlands) produce the most colorful paintings. It’s an antidote to the dreary weather.

Axia: In your landscapes, the explosive colors are the protagonist. Tell us about how you manage the color in your paintings and the messages you want to pass through it.

LC: My paintings are hyper-real, that is they are based on observation, but the color is saturated and the details are sharpened. This lends an air of magical realism to the landscapes. Color is used emotionally. But I have observed some amazing skies and water colors that don’t look real. The colors in nature can be unbelievably beautiful.

Axia: Which places where the inspiration for your island landscapes?

LC: The jewel-tone waters of the Caribbean, the aquamarine of St. Barts, the blue topaz of Aruba, and the deep sapphire of the Aegean,

Axia: Does sunset or sunrise inspires you more?

LC: I love both for their different moods, but sunsets seem to be more poignant.

Axia: Your landscapes are extremely luminous. Is that your way, to give us Optimism messages?

LC: One of my goals is to share the way I see the world because I receive so much joy from the beauty around me. I tend to seek beauty everywhere, even in an abandoned lot. The little flower that struggles up out of a crack is even more precious than a hothouse orchid, because it has struggled. Beauty comes from opposites, you can't have light without darkness, good without evil. But yes, I celebrate the good, so I can be called and optimist, and to spread joy and optimism, especially in these times, is a good thing.

Axia: How is the art market in New York today?

LC: The art market is huge in New York, but some smaller galleries are being forced out by high rents. This has also befallen our beloved Greek dinners, a New York institution!

Axia: Do you believe that the visual dialogue between Greece and U.S.A., is feasible?

LC: Of course, where would Western Civilization be without Greece? There is an increasingly global art practice. Often it's beneficial for an artist to go abroad and look back. James Joyce had to leave Ireland to write about his homeland. Alexis de Tocqueville viewed American democracy through a French lens, and Hemingway laid his "Moveable Feast" on a Parisian table. No doubt I will be influenced by my time in Santorini and process my observations through my paintings.

Axia: Tell us about your operation with Marlborough Gallery.

LC: My first show with Marlborough was in 2007 and I've been represented by them ever since. My paintings are very intricate and time consuming, so I have an exhibition every two years on average.

Axia: After your exhibition at Bellonio Cultural Center, will follow the exhibition “American History” of Michael Kapsalis. How do you feel about this very interesting “dialogue”?

LC: Love it! I hope he will shine a strong Greek light onto American History.

Axia: You are already a very famous artist. Which where the most important moments at your carrier?

LC: My upcoming exhibition at the Bellonio Cultural Center, on Santorini, is a highlight! I’ve been in some great museum shows and two biennials. One of my favorite museum exhibitions was “L.C. Armstrong: the Paradise Triptychs” at the Cornell Fine Arts Museum in Winterhaven Florida. The banner read, “Rembrandt, LC. Armstrong, Joseph Albers.

Axia: Are there any famous painters who you consider as “teachers”? Who affected your work?

LC: My influences have been many, including, Georgia O’Keefe, Frida Kahlo, Eva Hesse, Caspar David Friedrich, Henri Rousseau, Martin Johnson Heade, and Vincent Van Gogh.

Axia: Tell us about the Unique technique you use at your paintings.

LC: My early career, (customizing airbrushed, romantic scenes on vans) still influences my work. I eschew brush strokes in favor of a very smooth ethereal background upon which I layer brilliantly colored, gigantic flowers. The middle ground is populated with tiny animals and or people to emphasize the dramatic shifts in scale.

Axia: In your landscapes, flowers meet with ocean on a background of magical sunsets. Is this a modern romance that you consider necessary to awake feelings we have forgotten?

LC: A young man recently described walking on the beach at sunset on Cape Cod as “Walking in an L.C. Armstrong painting.” I think he saw with a deeper feeling and appreciation. I really liked that.

Axia: Which do you think is the most powerful weapon in art?

LC: Beauty and Humor; they are the paired Trojan horses to “break the frozen sea within.” (My apologies to Franz Kafka.)

Axia: Is the language of art universal?

LC: Certain aspects are. The essentials of color and form are perceived and affect us all, although each person or group may have differing interpretations.

Axia: According to you, an artist has the power to change bad things in the world?

LC: Art can lead us to see things from another’s vantage point, and that can help prevent us becoming mired in our assumptions and opinions. We suffer the daily atrocities in the news and have a visceral reaction. Art can help us to see from a philosopher’s questioning view, to see events as products of long percolating concepts. Art poses questions, and invites us to think outside of our comfort zones. So yes, in that way, Art can lead to change for good. The effect is rarely immediate, but the power of Art is evident by its repression by governments, who want total control over peoples’ minds and emotions.

Axia: There are many famous women who had a very significant role in the history of art. How difficult is for a woman, to succeed in such a difficult area and in the same time to manage with her personal life?

LC: As an artist, I wasn’t going to have children, but I got married at age forty and had a child at forty-two years old. I decided the best mother’s are happy, fulfilled mothers. For me painting is a necessity. I was working the day my daughter was born and I went back to work two weeks later. By the time my daughter was five years old, I had produced five solo shows. She is a happy, accomplished young woman who is at the University of Chicago. By the way, why don’t male artists get asked this question?

Axia: The time you are in your atelier and paint is the time you forget everything?

LC: Most of painting is seven hard hours a day, five to six days per week, standing, persevering. But sometimes the spirit flows through you,

and those times are the best. I have achieved some of my most creative paintings while in a near trance.

Axia: What's your biggest dream?

LC: From the age of three I wanted to be an artist. I'm living my dream!