

Artist to Collect

Lynda Schneider Granatstein





previous spread, *Gerbras and Lilies on Provence Tablecloth*, mixed media on canvas, 30" x 40"  
above, *Nicole Backstage*, mixed media on canvas, 12" x 16"



*Lion Amaryllis*, mixed media on canvas, 36" x 48"

## Taking Risks

written by Brett Anningson

Lynda Schneider Granatstein is one artist who has seen firsthand the benefit of taking risks. Not only on canvas but in life, as well. In order to pursue her creativity she has always dared to step into the unknown and reap the benefits.

"It is true," says Lynda. "I have taken chances. With no previous connections, I asked to paint the dancers of Les Grands Ballets in their studios, 16 years ago. I ended up with friendships and muses that I know will be part of my life always. I am still painting these dancers. It began like this: I made sketches in the "Green Room", and then was allowed to take photos. The artistic coordinator then gave me a coveted backstage pass and I

took photos of the dancers as they were getting ready to go on stage at Place Des Arts and other venues. I couldn't believe that I was allowed to see the magic of the falling "snow" on the dancers during the Nutcracker production – I cried – I saw the strength, the endurance, the talent of these professionals and I felt exhilarated. I made paintings of these scenes, and had a solo show in 2003 that was sold out."

There have been other unexpected opportunities. Lynda was asked to collaborate in a new dance production by choreographer/dancer Andrew Giday. It was called "Ego Ideal" in homage to Freud. Lynda designed costumes and sets and was even on stage pretending to paint a large painting while the dancers mimicked her movements. In the same vein, she was also asked to play a part in a theatre/dance film by Louis-Martin Charest – she was La Patronne, owner of the Cabaret Lion d'Or!

Lynda admits, "I applied to a gallery in Florence, Italy never thinking that I would have a solo show there. It is my favourite city in the world. I was accepted, and it lasted a month. I rented an apartment there for the duration and all my children came and stayed with me at different times. I was in heaven walking around a city for four weeks immersed in museums, churches, monuments, gardens and divine restaurants. I came to realize that my world travels, which are so important to me, have a pronounced influence on my work. Recently, I have made trips to Vietnam, Cambodia, India, Peru, and hiked the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Each region and its culture have impacted my work.

"I applied to be an artist-in-residence at the Banff Centre, the epitome of all creative and inspirational endeavours by wildly famous artists in all media, nurtured in the most beautiful setting of forests and mountains, rivers and lakes. They had

asked for a detailed description of my process, the dimensions and media that I would require for my project, my history, etc., but I had no plan. I just wanted to absorb it all and see what I came up with... and to my astonishment, I was accepted!"

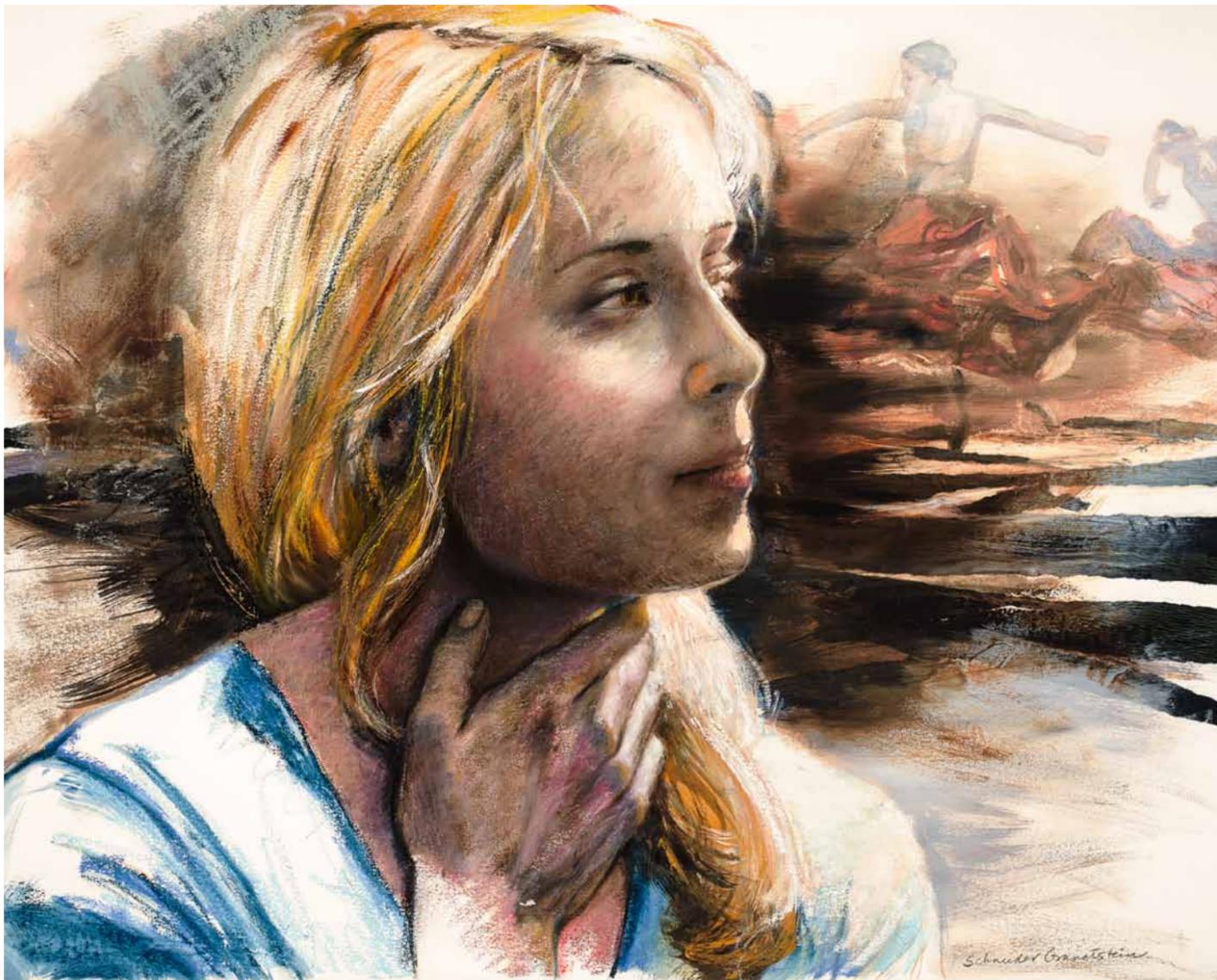
So began a period with her very own studio in the woods of the prestigious Leighton Artists' Colony. The studio had previously been used by Joni Mitchell. For two months, Lynda created paintings of The Stoney First Nations people, the Alberta Ballet who were rehearsing there for their film "Love Lies Bleeding", and so many others. Lynda says, "There were poets in another artist-in-residency program who posed nude for me in the woods behind my studio. One wrote a poem about this experience, which I included in my painting of her. It was all so stimulating; I had to pinch myself to believe I was really there. I was so moved by the beauty of the setting that I began to make landscapes in earnest."



left, *Pitcher of Roses in Sunroom*, mixed media on canvas, 40" x 30"  
above, *Sunlight into Living Room*, mixed media on canvas, 36" x 48"

below, *Tulips Over Teacups*, mixed media on canvas, 30" x 40"





About Sarah, mixed media on arches oil paper, 22" x 30"



Jodi & Stef, Banff II, mixed media on canvas, 16" x 20"

### In the Beginning

Almost from the beginning, Lynda knew that art was her calling. This may have come from her father, Harold Schneider, who was, himself, an artist. She watched her father paint in his spare time in the sunroom of their home overlooking the St. Lawrence and, before long, she was being encouraged to work alongside. He always challenged her in terms of composition and perspective. Slowly, Lynda graduated from pencil to watercolour. Her father was a student at Ecole des Beaux Arts alongside Jean-Paul Riopelle; his mentors were Paul-Émile Borduas and Alfred Pellon, and although he grew to love painting abstractly, he was an extraordinary draughtsman underneath it all.

Lynda recalls, "When I was 12 years old, I

went to the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts and had Sunday classes with the genius Arthur Lismer of the Group of Seven. What a crazy-wild, disheveled, white-haired, mad professor he was – yelling: "Draw!! Draw!! Draw!!" Despite being born with the "gene" to draw, I always knew the value of hard work and discipline in the craft."

Lynda's father had to earn a living for the family in advertising, but he also continued to paint. Lynda, too, came to realize that she needed a job she could count on. "So, I spent 11 years at McGill University studying psychology and short term psychodynamic therapy, and received my master's degree there, loving becoming a psychotherapist. Concurrently, I studied art at Concordia and the Saidye Bronfman Centre, sculpture with Stanley Lewis, printmaking (etching)

with Roslyn Swartzman, and photo etching with Doreen Lindsay. It was at this time that I started to see how my interest in Freudian theory led me to create works dealing with introspection. I began writing on my work in a type of stream of consciousness, so as to combine words with layers of etchings and paper collage and other mediums such as oil and pastel; so that the literal layers would become metaphors for the spiritual ones I was trying to convey."

It was after her children had gone to nursery school that Lynda rented a studio in Old Montreal, where she worked every moment possible for 25 years. She remembers it being like going to work on a movie set, with many actual movies being filmed near the studio. More importantly, there was an Old Montreal artist gang all around her –

something she feels was very good for her soul. "I learned the value of collaboration there," she says, "and although I am a figurative, representational artist, I was exposed to the craziest of installations and music/art/dance fusions, and I loved it all. When I moved my studio to my new home 10 years ago, those contacts blossomed to involve my work in theatre and film. I knew I could never stick to one series; there were so many ways to express myself. I was becoming competent in many mediums so my mixed media approach to most of my work has stood me in good stead."

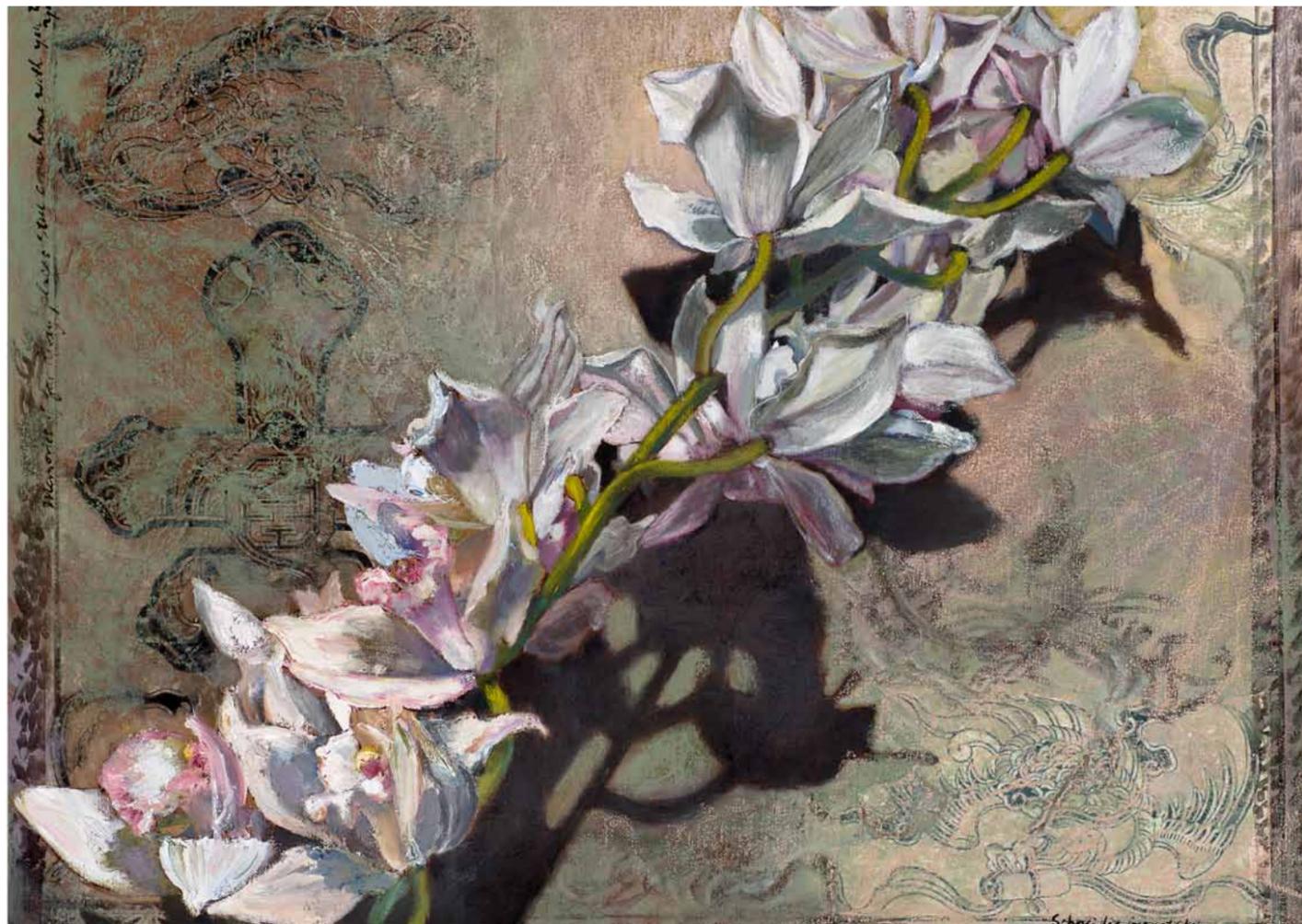
### The Inward Journey

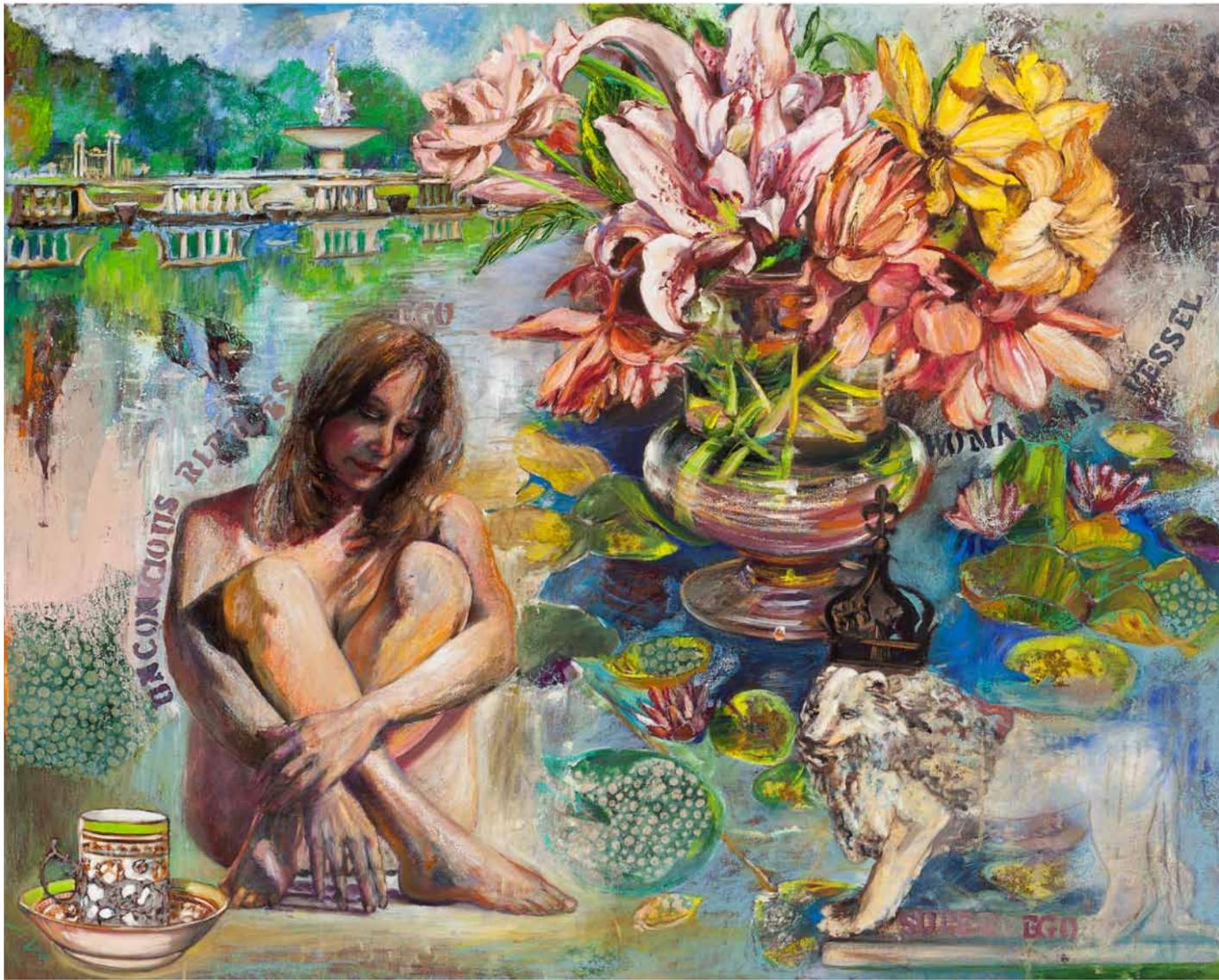
"I have always felt that the values in your life and work should be congruent," Lynda muses. "The values you learn during your life affect your



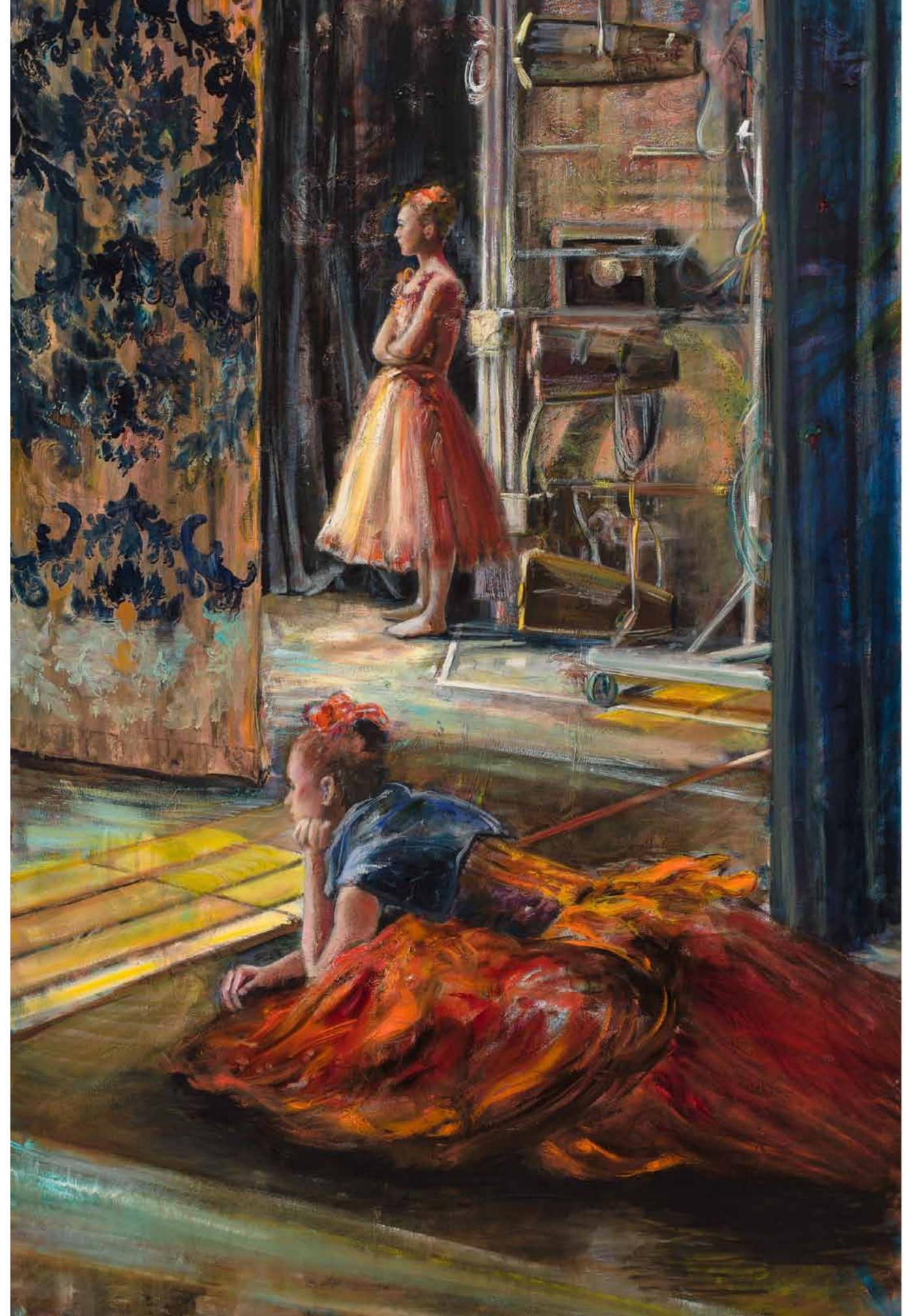
above, *Memory Collection*, mixed media on canvas, 30" x 36"  
below, *White Orchid Cambodian Print 1*, mixed media on canvas, 20" x 24"

right, *Amaryllis in Antique Planter*, mixed media on canvas, 30" x 24"





above, *Memory Collection 2*, mixed media on canvas, 48" x 60"



right, *Watching the "Pas de Deux" 2*, mixed media on canvas, 60" x 40"

work. By having a dedicated work schedule, by being on time for gallery schedules, by honouring what you have committed to do, and by having professional courtesy to colleagues who are exhibiting with you, you form a reputation that you can be proud of."

The other way this philosophy overlaps is the very real sense in which everything interests Lynda. Her work depicts a wide variety of subjects and uses a wide variety of creative materials. "The glue that holds them all together, of course, is my technique," says Lynda, "which has evolved over time to be a mixed media approach. I tear up etchings and collagraph prints I've made, and textured coloured paper from all over the world, and use them for collage. I add acrylic, pastel and oil paint, all in archival order to delineate my

initial drawing and develop it further in texture and colour."

When speaking of inspiration Lynda begins with her absolute belief in the meditative process of painting. She loves conveying the scenes backstage or in rehearsal. Then there are personal interiors, objects in her own home and other people's homes, as well. She likes the challenges of the landscape and cityscape; of making paintings of places that resonate with her and her experiences. You might notice a pattern. Through her work Lynda seeks to portray outwardly the inward affection of a place. It is her hope that she captures meaning and subtext, personality and effect, within each scene she brings to life.

"An artist will always find something that will be a favourite thing at the moment," Lynda





previous spread, March Flowers, mixed media on canvas, 30" x 40"

left, Tea In My Studio, mixed media on canvas, 24" x 40"

above, Sara (Grandmother's dress) Leaning on Living Room Chair, mixed media on canvas, 24" x 30"

concludes. "It doesn't matter what the medium is, what the tools are, what the support is, or even the subject. It matters to create something that is unique to you – your vision. It is about your artistic needs met in that moment and the culmination of moments that creates the work. My inspiration comes from those things, scenes, people, events that have an impact on my life. Every object in my still lifes, for example, has a meaning or a history for me. Nothing is arbitrary. For me, the work is always well thought out. At least the beginning, that is, and where it ends even I can't know ... 'til the end. When someone asks me how I can

part with a particular painting or drawing, I always say that it's the journey towards the creation that matters to me, not the end result."

Lynda Schneider Granatstein is represented by Chantal Beauchamp. All photographs of her paintings are done by Russell Proulx. To see more of Lynda Schneider Granatstein's work, visit [www.lyndasg.ca](http://www.lyndasg.ca).

Her work is available at:

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