

Susan Pepler – her art reflects a



zest for life Enter Stage Left! Sharman Yarnell

As I entered stage left, I found myself in a framework of beautiful art.

She has sold to doctors, lawyers and a Supreme Court Judge. Her paintings hang in homes across Canada and Europe, even in Japan.

She has been exhibited across Canada, the United States and France.

From her stunning, vibrant life-like florals, to her vintage Cuban cars, Montreal artist, Susan Pepler, quite simply catches the spirit of whatever her focus is.

You may argue that inanimate things don't have a spirit - well, beauty in anything can take us on a wonderful trip, lifting our spirits to other heights. That is Pepler's goal, and Pepler succeeds. One of her clients once told her that



"looking at your painting every day reminds me that I'm alive".

I met with Pepler (and Gigi her small dog) in her downtown home and took time to savour all that life she has created. From the moment you walk through the door, you pick up on that positive energy and zest she has for life. Other than her florals, it's clear that she doesn't latch on to the ordinary artist's fare. At present, she is working on painting swimming pools that are so life-like, you almost want to order a majito and lounge in one of the



chairs under the palm trees. She has the unique ability to breathe life into the ordinary.

Pepler's Cuban Cars transport us back to a life in the past. (You can almost catch the scent of cigars wafting from the front seat.) Her florals evoke the warmth and brightness of summer. They are so absolutely breathtaking. They possess a life of their own, these bunches of flowers in a bouquet, or single flowers paired off like dancers with skirts billowing in the wind with colours that are rich, dazzling and daring.

Her teacups are delicate, personal and charming - priceless little gems, hidden, forgotten at the back of a cupboard, brought to the forefront for their moment of glory. Perched at the base of a vase of flowers or all on their own, Aunt Emma's treasure never had it so good.

Pepler has come a long way from mastering colouring books as a child. That's how it all started. When other little girls played with dolls, she was hunched over a colouring book, working her Crayolas to the nub. (She comes by her talent honestly. Her great uncle was Frederick de Henwood, the American impressionist and sculptor, a selection of whose work can be found in Our Lady Queen of Martyrs Church in Forest Hills, New York.)

Pepler grew up in small towns around Quebec, Newfoundland and Labrador and even spent a year at boarding school in Singapore when her family lived in Malaysia. If you pick up a tropical feel in some of her paintings, it's probably due to time spent with her grandparents in Jamaica. "I have a thing for the tropics - it's that luscious, inviting quality"

Pepler may not have known from a very early age that she wanted to paint. But she knew that beauty and colour stirred her. "I always wanted to do everything, I always wanted to make everything beautiful." After graduating with a Fine Arts degree from Concordia University, she took a job in commercial arts in advertising, creating

storyboards at which she was most successful. (If anyone can bring a box of Kleenex to life it's Susan Pepler!) After teaching art and advertising at Dawson, she set to doing what she was born to do - pulling out the beauty in everything around her. She has an innate talent of taking the inanimate and bringing it to life.

She remembers her first 'sale' with a chuckle. "It was actually an exchange." He had a small green couch she wanted and she had a painting he wanted. So they bartered. (It's the couch she's sitting on in the picture).

In 2002, Pepler visited Cuba. That's when she saw the cars - those "beautiful old beasts from the past, still running. Such endurance. They almost had a human touch to them". They are painted, in acrylic, on large canvases, head on. One can only say that this phase of her work is truly exceptional.

Pepler likes to paint to music. "Music makes me remember why I'm alive." It takes her to a place where she is able to "zone in to paint". She loves Johnny Cash - you may think he would be the influence for the cars but, no, he zones her into the flowers. For the cars --- it's Cuban music, of course. Another favourite is the Diva aria from La Wally.

Her paintings have just had a very successful debut in Toronto, as well as an exhibition in Westmount and in the Eastern Townships. Results are always positive. You can catch her next feature exhibition in the fall at Montreal's prestigious MAA Club - a fabulous venue, where the work is beautifully showcased.

I believe them to be most fortunate to have Pepler's glorious contributions.



You can enjoy more of Susan Pepler's art on her webpage, www.susanpepler.com - where you will also find her contact information to arrange a private studio visit.