

Celebrate HOME

WINTER 2013

MAGAZINE



THE ARTIST
Gladys Roldan-de-Moras

THE ARTIST

Interview with **Gladys-Roldan-de-Moras** by **Cindy Dyer** · Photography by **Cindy Dyer**

Gladys Roldan-de-Moras

Impressionist Painter

Always proud of her Colombian and Mexican roots, Gladys Roldan-de-Moras' passion for art is reflected in her colorful work. I had the good fortune to cross paths with her through an introduction by my sister, Debbie, who shared "band mom" duties when both of their eldest children were still in high school. Gladys invited me to her studio in San Antonio in January, and to say that I was inspired is an understatement. As a fellow painter, I soaked in her advice for hours, surrounded by her paintings, art supplies and props, and enough books to keep this fellow biblioholic happy! She was a wealth of information and shared her life's work with Celebrate Home Magazine.

IN THE BEGINNING...

When did you start drawing and creating, and when did you first consider yourself an artist?

I guess I always knew I was an artist. My fondest and youngest memories were always related to art. I remember seeing beautiful Impressionists prints my dad had bought. I studied them carefully in complete awe. I remember very vividly the portrait my grandmother had commissioned of my grandfather and trying to figure out how the artist created it. I took art classes as often as possible.

What is your formal educational background?

You mentioned you began as a medical student.

Can you tell me a little about that and how you switched to art?

I always wanted to study art but it was highly discouraged by my parents, who said art was not for the intellectual mind and the Lord had given me one. I was born and raised in Monterrey, Mexico, and there I entered the highly prestigious medical

school at the TEC of Monterrey, Mexico. I decided to go into medicine, with the intent to specialize in plastic surgery. After five-and-a-half years of medical school, I married my husband, Rafael, who was finishing his Ph.D. in the United States. I joined him in Austin and graduated alongside him with a bachelors degree in biology and minor in art, still thinking I would continue with medicine. Years later, our son, Rafael Jr., was born. He had very serious health issues. I did not feel the calling to be a physician anymore. I could not take the suffering of people, and this time it was me on the other side. There and then, my husband encouraged me to do what I had always wanted to do, with his full support.

What artists have you studied under?

I have studied under many great artists, and I would hate to forget to mention one, but I credit the years of studying with Dan Gerhartz and his sincere willingness to share with me and teach me for opening my eyes to true art. For this, I will be forever grateful.

You mentioned your love of Sorolla's work.

What attracts you to his work?

I love Sorolla's work, and he is my favorite old master artist, with his beautiful brushstrokes, to the beautiful rendering of sunshine and movement, and his varied subjects. I also admire what a strong man of faith and family he was.

continued



The Good Book Oil/Belgian Linen 30x24 2013 Texas Masters Invitational at InSight Gallery in Fredericksburg, Texas



Guadalupe Oil on Belgian Linen 24x36

“Learn everything about your materials, techniques, basic concepts and then, once you have mastered that, be true to yourself, paint what you love, paint what your own eyes see, what attracts you and work hard. ”

THE ARTIST

What other famous artists have influenced you, and how?

Now that is a very hard question, because I am in constant awe of new artists that I discover. Aside from all the contemporary artists that I have been so fortunate to study with like Dan Gerhartz, Scott Burdick, Quang Ho, Kevin MacPherson, Jeffrey Watts, Laura Robb and others. There are also the Impressionists and all the Spanish Masters of the Romantic School—Sorolla, Pradilla, Fechin and Serov.

Which art movements have you been influenced by?

I am influenced by World Impressionism, the Romantics, the Pre-Raphaelites, the American Impressionist Painters, the Boston School, the Spanish Romantics, and so many more.

What was your first painting?

What I consider was my first artwork was a profile pencil drawing I did of my sister Carolyn when I was about 11 years old. Unfortunately, I lost that drawing.

Share the story about that artist who said you were the most attentive model he had ever hired—and then he found out why you were paying so close attention.

It was around 1995 and Scott Burdick had come to teach a workshop at the Coppini Academy of Fine Arts in San Antonio. I did not get a place in the workshop, but the coordinator, Janice Hindes, was looking for models and she knew that I collected handmade Mexican dresses. She asked me to model for the workshop and I chose a China Poblana dress that was hand-embroidered by my grandmother when she was a teenager in the early 1920s.

I remember just posing very still and paying so much attention to what Scott was saying. During my break, I would write down notes. Then Scott mentioned that he had never had a model who was so interested in what he was saying. Then he found out that I was an artist, too! I was fortunate to take several workshops with him later.

THE ARTIST

THE BUSINESS SIDE OF ART...

Has trying to develop your artwork into a means of earning a living changed either your work or your process?

I think it has given me more responsibility to try and paint the best I could and hopefully find a home for the painting, so I could pay bills and continue to take workshops.

I wanted to take more classes and workshops and that is expensive. So I decided to teach a beginning oil painting class at the Coppini Academy, in San Antonio. I always knew that I loved to teach, and this confirmed it. I taught for almost 18 years, and I can't tell you how much I learned from the students.

I took local classes with Janice Yow Hindes and at the same time taught my own class. She is a beloved teacher in San Antonio. One day she came into class and shared with us that she had to quit teaching in order to get the health benefits of a regular job. We were all devastated. And we asked, who is going to take your place? To my total surprise, she said, "There is only one person that I feel can do this. And that person is Gladys."

I was shocked, but I accepted the challenge. I still remember the first day I came into class—which was composed of more than 15 students, and only two students showed up. I clearly remember these two artists. This, by far, was one of the hardest things I had ever done—walk in someone else's shoes, knowing that they were too big for me. This made me work even harder. Now I had my regular beginners class as well as Janice's class. I am happy to say that some students started rejoining and I had a waiting list for my classes. I thank Janice for believing in me and trusting in me.

How do you handle business of being an artist?

I have always had wonderful artist friends for advice, plus the loving support of my husband and family. This is not my favorite part of the business.

You taught painting for years. Do you enjoy teaching?

I absolutely love teaching. I just wish I had more time. I have taught at the Coppini and abroad.

What galleries represent your work?

InSight Gallery in Fredericksburg, Texas
Greenberg Fine Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico
The Legacy Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona

THE PROCESS...

Tell me about your typical start-to-finish workflow on a painting.

I have several ways that I do this. First comes the inspiration, which most of the time comes from listening to a particular piece of music. It might be something I literally "saw." It might be a color harmony that I really liked, or it might just be an idea that popped into my head.

I start with pencil designs. I start sketching, imagining the possibilities. Then I might have a model come in and pose for me. I do quick pencil sketches and make color notes. Then I take a lot of photo references. I have a lot of fun looking for props, outfits and locations. My studio is so full of fabrics, dresses, and props that sometimes I think it looks like a thrift shop!

I do more studies, and then many times ask my model to come back and we start on the painting. Usually I do the face using the model, and afterward I use my lifesize mannequin who serves in the model's place.

Painting from life is my favorite way of working. Nothing compares to it, but sometimes I might use photographs, especially for the subjects that are in movement. For example, in the Jarocha collection (folkloric dancers of the state of Veracruz), I will go to the cafe where they are performing and do sketching and color studies and take photographs. I later develop them into paintings. I do the same thing for my escaramuzas and charros.

I am a slow painter. I paint every day, but not all paintings make it out of my studio.

I definitely see the influence of impressionism in your work. How would you define your style?

My style has evolved after many years of study, teaching and lots and lots of brush mileage. It was artist Quang Ho who helped me to not be afraid and to just let go.

continued

THE ARTIST

What inspires you?

The beauty of God's creation; anything beautiful I can see and for which I am thankful. I try to paint paintings that will leave the viewer with a smile on their face. So much to paint, so little time!

I know you love to listen to music while you paint. What type of music do you prefer?

Mostly classical, but not solely. I have a very eclectic taste. Since my life is surrounded by music, I find that beautiful music lifts up my soul. I try and capture that in my own paintings. Many times, I will hand write on the back of each canvas the precise music (with the artist name and recording) I was listening to as I painted that piece. Many times it is easier for me to remember the name of the music I was listening to while painting than the actual title I gave the painting! I also enjoy listening to art lectures while I paint. There are some fabulous websites like the Smithsonian Institution lecture series.

You have a large library of art books. What books do you like to reference most often when working?

Oh, I have tons of books—some I consider my treasures. Most of my favorite ones are out of print and highly sought—the Emile Gruppe books, the *Figure in the Landscape* by Sadakichi Hartmann is one of my absolute favorites; all the Andrew Loomis books; all the artists library books from the turn of the century; all the Sorolla books, Fechin, Sargent, Zorn, Impressionists... way too many to fully list! My most prized book is one of only 200 signed and numbered editions of Cecelia Beau's autobiography.

Why do you prefer studying the masters rather than more contemporary publications?

I find so much inspiration by studying forgotten or obscure painters, and I keep finding more.



“My style has evolved after many years of study, teaching, and lots and lots of brush mileage.”

THE ARTIST

How do you like to work? In big blocks of time? Finishing a work in one session?

I try and work every day. My routine is usually from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. with a lunch break. I usually have a routine. I go up to my studio, start putting out paint, setting out everything I need, and putting everything in place while I start my daily prayers. I have a series of daily meditations that I go through. I will listen to music or some kind of art or spiritual lecture. I listen to things that will leave me with some knowledge, as well as uplift me.

Unless I have a big deadline, I will paint at night, but I prefer to work with natural light. At night, I start with some music and a nice cup of coffee. I get out some art books, and simply study,

study and study. Or, I'll take my iPad to bed and start visiting virtual collections online.

I have learned lately that the more time I spend designing and problem-solving on a painting, the less probable it will be a disaster. But not all paintings leave my studio. I am usually working on several paintings at the same time. If I get tired of a particular work, I will let it rest for a couple of days and come back to it with fresh eyes.

Recently, I have been posting my paintings on Facebook as I am working on them. People seem to enjoy that, and I like to share whatever knowledge I have. I love to keep in contact with so many friends on Facebook. Also, I try to attend open life model sessions on Wednesdays at the Coppini.

Pastorale Oil on Belgian Linen 11x14



Escaramuza Charra Oil on Belgian Linen 24x30

How does working with others—in workshops or when you teach—shape your work and how does it differ from being alone in your studio?

I believe that an artist should not be isolated. I am thankful that we now live in the era of Facebook and Skype. I love to check in with other artist friends and see what everybody is up to. I also love to travel and meet with other artists to paint.

When does color come into the work? Do you often know this will be a “warm” painting from the start, for example?

I don't always work in the same manner. I like to try different ways. But many times when I am attracted to a particular color harmony, I will try and visualize it in my head. Also, many times I feel

like painting sunlight because I love the sun, but I also find it intriguing to create a higher key painting that involves all colors and shades of grays. Sometimes I know that there is a particular color that I want to bring out, and other times I am constantly remembering that I need to tone down my colors. Kevin MacPherson taught me years ago, “If everybody is shouting, then no one is being heard.”

Will you shift colors a lot? Will a green sofa become blue for instance, as you work on a piece? Or are there subtler shifts as you paint?

I try to work out these problems in preliminary sketches, but it doesn't mean I won't change something later on. I try to keep my initial idea in mind.

continued

THE ARTIST

You work your way up to the canvas utilizing pencil sketches and small oil studies to determine composition and color blocking. Have you always worked this way?

I guess as I have matured in my art, I have come to realize how important it is for me to do so. I find that I am more secure of what I want to accomplish—plus it is fun to draw on paper again.

When you are finished with a work, are you sentimental about it?

Sometimes I wish I had kept some, but with three kids in college, bills are first. I take my art very seriously and I am so grateful to those collectors that have included and continue to include my art in their private collections. I feel it is an honor.

What materials do you like to work with? You mentioned that you tried acrylic and water-mixable oils but that your preference is oil.

I try and work with some of the finest products available. I take my art seriously and the archival-ry of my paintings is important to me. I love to use bristol and sable brushes. I love Grand Prix, Royal Sable, Robert Simmons and Rosemary brushes in all shapes and size, but mostly use filberts—extra long filberts and squares.

I use several brands of professional grade paints—Rembrandt, Utrecht, LeFranc, Gamblin. I currently only use a little of Gamsol, and only poppyseed oil as my medium. Although I have painted in watercolors, pastels, conté pencils, and acrylics over the years, I have solely been using oil paint for over the last 15 years.

What is that metal plaque that you put on your easel ledge before you begin painting?

It reads, "Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace." That is one of the most beautiful prayers written by St. Francis of Assisi. Assisi is one of my favorite places in the world, and this prayer describes exactly the way I strive to live my life.

Make Me an Instrument of Your Peace

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;*

*Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.
Amen.*

What is the relationship that exists between your artwork and your cultural heritage?

Interestingly, I have been noticing more and more that my Latin and Spanish cultures keeps showing through my paintings. I don't set out to paint a Spanish/Latin theme—I simply set out to paint what I consider beautiful. Sometimes it involves me traveling and working in other places of the world, and I guess it simply seeps through. I believe that the places in which you were brought up, your life, and your tastes all show through in your work, and I guess that is something that will never disappear from my paintings.

I know you often paint from models and that your daughter is also a frequent model.

My dear daughter Analucia (Annie) has been posing for me since she was a baby. I remember one incident where she came to me and ask me if we could go to Disney World for the holidays. I asked her if she would pose for me and then we could sell some paintings. She posed for me for several paintings, and they they all found homes. We had a great time at Disney World!

Annie and my niece are my favorite models because they know exactly what I am looking for.

When Annie found out that I paid my professional models, she quickly let me know that she

continued



Charreada Fiesta Oil on Belgian Linen 24x48



Mission San José Oil on Belgian Linen 18x24

THE ARTIST

was a “professional” model, and then she would eagerly pose for me. She continues to model for me and I know she is only a phone call away. I also have other models from the Coppini Academy as well as friends and their children.

You love to collect props—dresses, still life elements, etc. Tell me about your collection.

I started collecting when I was very young. My grandmother had gifted me some old dresses which thought were so beautiful. It was when she gave me the “China Poblana” dress that I started seriously collecting.

Now I find it so fun not only to work on designs and compositions, but also to hunt for props, dresses, and locations. The hunt is part of the excitement. If I am painting themes like the escaramuzas (term for Mexican cowgirls, the national female sport of Mexico), I buy professional dresses that I put on my life-size mannequin.

How does traveling and seeing art across the world influence your own work? Do you have a favorite place to visit, paint, and see galleries?

I believe our whole life experience is what makes each of us unique. Nobody has walked in our shoes, gone to the places we have gone or done the things that we have done. All of that, for some reason, will show up and penetrate our work. I can tell a lot about an artist by looking at their work. It is like a window into their soul.

I love to paint in Italy and Mexico, aside from all the beautiful places in the U.S. I am not a big landscape painter. I prefer intimate figures and still life scenes. I love to travel to places, collect props, paint the country and somehow absorb the environment. There are so many beautiful places I am looking forward to visit. I also find that I am more attracted to sunny places.

Escaramuza in San Antonio Oil on Belgian Linen 20x36
Winner “Best in Show” 2012 American Impressionist Society National Juried Exhibition



Song from a Secret Garden Oil on Belgian Linen 22x28

What has given you the most satisfaction in your career?

Every time someone acquires one of my paintings, I am grateful. Just recently one of my paintings received the 2012 American Impressionist Society Best in Show Award, which was quite an honor!

What is the best advice you were ever given?

Paint from life.

What advice would you give to an artist?

Paint from life! Learn everything about your materials, techniques, basic concepts and then, once you have mastered that, be true to yourself, paint what you love, paint what your own eyes

see, what attracts you and work hard. Study, paint, study, paint and if you are able, share your knowledge with others. We learn so much more from our students. Look for the best teacher you can find, one who is willing to really share with you and help you grow as an artist. Master the basics and give your brushes lots of mileage. In every painting you do, strive to do your best.

Visit museums, website and expose yourself to the best art you can find. In doing this you will learn to appreciate great art and, little by little, it will start to show up in your work. Follow your dream. Believe in yourself and never give up. And don't forget to enjoy the ride. This is a lifelong learning road.

continued

THE ARTIST

How do you maintain a balance between the demands and desires of being a mom and a wife and being an artist?

I am grateful to my husband who has always believed in me and supported me. Our children grew up always seeing their mom working in a studio. They learned to respect my time in the studio when other adults never did and took my profession very seriously.

Everywhere I went I would have a book with me, or I would be listening to a tape or sketching. Every single moment I could find, whether waiting for them after school in the car, I would be immersed in studying. I love my immediate family because they always supported me and believed in me.

I know that your entire family is creative. Can you tell us more about each of their creative endeavors and how they support yours?

On my side of the family, there are artists, fashion designers, singers, graphic artists. On my husband's side there are also poets, writers, and singers. My husband is an engineering professor, but he is also a talented poet and musician. He composes mostly religious music and sets the music to religious plays that my mother-in-law has written. I am very proud of him.

Our oldest son, Rafael, is an emerging opera singer; our middle son, David, is a ceramic artist; and our daughter Annie is a psychology/music major. David started out studying business management and then made the switch to a BFA and he will soon complete his degree.

It is interesting to note that I have never taught any of our kids art, but they were all innately very gifted in art. Of course, David has chosen this career and I wish I was half as talented as he is when I was his age. I can't wait to see what beautiful works come out of his studio. He is so talented.

Since I was never supported by my parents in my art career, we have always supported and encouraged each of our children in their interests.

NETWORKING...

Does having an "audience" via your blog and Facebook page affect your work or how you think about your work?

Facebook has been important in my work as an artist. I recently learned that some important people have been following my page, and for that, I am very grateful. I love to be in communication with people, especially other artists. Right now, I am not teaching a weekly class, so it can get lonely in the studio. Having a network of friends and artists out there gives my work another dimension.

In what ways do you think the Internet affects your art in today's world or in the future?

I think that we have only seen the tip of the iceberg of how the Internet helps us. I am in awe of the contacts and sales I have because of people who see what I am working on in my studio, plus they like to learn more about my family.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE...

What is your most important dream as an artist that is yet to be fulfilled?

My dream would be to one day have a show with my son, David. That would be my dream. Other than that, I just try and paint the best paintings possible and hope that the next one will be better. I just want to paint beautiful paintings, that's all—and leave something beautiful behind.

Do you have any upcoming projects?

I have a one-woman show scheduled for spring of 2014 that will portray my Spanish heritage with paintings of mostly Spanish and Mexican women. **CHM**

See more of Gladys' work on her website at www.roldandemoras.com. She can be reached at gladysroldandemoras@gmail.com. Follow her on Facebook at [whats-on-my-easel](#).

Poet Rafael Moras, Sr.: www.luxdomini.com
Tenor Rafael Moras, Jr.: www.rafaelmoras.com
Ceramic artist David Moras: www.davidmoras.com

THE ARTIST

Taped to the top of Gladys' easel is a letter from her artist friend, Quang Ho. I was inspired by his letter to her and wanted to share it with my fellow artists. —Cindy Dyer

To have fear means that you are hanging onto something that you've decided is valuable, isn't it? Most of the time, we never realize the true nature of fear—which is just made up and has no basis on reality at all. What's the worst that can happen? Maybe paint a painting or two that don't turn out the way you expected. You'll learn more from those (with an open heart and mind) than the next 30 of the same old ways!

I've found that the "tightness" that you are talking about in your painting has little to do with painting using "looser" brushwork. It has more to do with getting beyond the first level (subject bound) and seeing the painting more on a big picture relationship between shapes, values, colors, edges (second level). When you are firstly thinking about the big flow of structural shapes and value relationships and not bogged down by what the individual subject should look like, you are more likely to allow the flow between areas that create a sense of the painting being alive, loose, and expressive.

The nice thing is that you already have the skill to do it. Have fun. Focus on the abstract arrangements and let the things you are painting drop in where you think it's needed (this is the artistic part). **CHM**



Before beginning a painting, Gladys does preliminary pencil sketches and small oil studies to determine composition and color blocking.



The best advice I received from my inspiring afternoon with Gladys...

Load up, loosen up, and constantly squint!