

An abstract painting featuring a complex composition of rectangular and irregular shapes. The color palette is dominated by various shades of blue, green, and yellow, with accents of purple, brown, and pink. The brushwork is thick and expressive, creating a sense of depth and texture. The overall effect is a vibrant, multi-layered visual experience.

DONNA SCARPA

Cover:  
*Pink Skies Over Jaipur*, 2021  
Oil on linen  
43 x 40 inches

Donna Scarpa

*Reconstructing*

March 1 - 26, 2022

Interviewed by Patricia Spergel

**THE PAINTING CENTER**

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## Interview of Donna Scarpa, December 2021

Patricia - At what point in your life did you decide that you wanted to be an artist? And what brought you to making art?

Donna - I've probably made art all my life. I don't think as a child, I consciously chose it, I think art found me. I grew up in New Jersey outside of Philadelphia and my High School had a very good art track. I took whatever art classes my school had to offer including ceramic classes. My oldest sister is an artist, she was my mentor. My parents were not artists, but my sister recognized that I had the talent, and the interest to pursue art. On Saturdays I went to Moore College of Art in Philadelphia, and I took their courses for high school kids. We did life drawing and made really cool blind contour drawings.

Patricia - My next question is how do you get into the zone before you start to work in your sacred space of your studio? What rituals do you have to get into that place?

Donna - My studio is in my house so before I start a session of painting, I like to leave the house and I often go out for a walk. I've been doing this for the past couple of years. I walk and I look; and I imagine what I want to work on in my studio. Kind of like sketching ideas. I start to calm myself down by physically moving and breathing in fresh air and looking at my surroundings. I generally walk by myself and not with a friend because I try to stay disciplined and guard my studio time. It's very easy to get off track.

Patricia - I think it's interesting, since you've moved to a more rural setting in Connecticut, the colors have changed. This makes a lot of sense after hearing how you approach things, because before your move you would have been going past lawns, houses, schools and gardens.

Donna - Yes up here there is a lot more sky, woods, streams, lakes, marshlands and rolling hills. Before the view was more compressed. And my colors have shifted a bit. There is a lot more blue and gray in my work presently.

Patricia - When you are painting, what kind of conceptual concerns are you thinking about as they relate to the medium? Is painting an oil on canvas different than when you're approaching a paper piece?

Donna - When you work in different media it definitely affects your art, so you think about how you will approach your work. There are some restraints with all media, and it does affect the outcome. Recently I've been working with acrylic on paper. I'm enjoying the fluid aspects of this and the way it moves similarly to watercolor paint. I like acrylic on paper because you can draw into it, layer it and cover things up quickly. With oil paint there is more process one has to follow such as fat over lean. When I follow this process I get more effective results, and better color clarity. My recent goal has been to get the oil paints to move more fluidly. I'm trying to find that sweet spot in painting, that keeps the impulsiveness in the work, yet has some restraint, but there's fluidity and structure in the work.

Patricia - How do you begin a painting and how do you choose your palette? What is your method?

Donna - I like to get in touch with what kind of mood I'm in that day and what kind of color I want to explore. I usually have several paintings going in various stages of completion. When I set up my palette I usually start with complimentary colors. For instance, greens on the left, and reds and pinks on the right. Warm hues and cool hues. White in the middle. Sometimes I like to flip the colors by putting a transparent glaze over the painting. Choosing a color that is opposite in color temperature and hue.

Patricia - I understand you've worked as a textile designer?

Donna - I have, and this influence comes out in my work but not always consciously. I have a love for tactile surfaces that make you want to look at them closely and touch. I like to explore the many ways I can build a textural, tactile surface in a sensuous way. The effect of colors being woven together, as in the structure of a beautiful woven fabric.

Patricia - I like the way you bring these ideas together with your landscape and nature influence and textile background. This makes your work unique.

Patricia - So the age-old question is how do you know your painting is done? Do you ever go back and change your mind?

Donna - Yes. I had an experience with this recently. I was working on a painting, and I ended up repainting it five times over. Completely changing it each time. When I looked back, I realized that none of the versions were bad. I could have had five different paintings instead of one. After this I vowed THAT I would never do this again. Instead, I stop and move to another painting when I am stuck. Beating a painting is a sure way to kill it.

But there's a fine line between stopping too soon because you haven't found the juice in your painting. You can be seduced early on by the underpainting. Or somebody comes into your studio, and they say, oh wow I love that. Showing people your paintings when they're not finished can really sway your opinion. I think a painting is finished when it starts to feel whole, when things are in their position and the colors feel right.

The one behind you, has a sort of unfinished look. I left it that way because this kind of painting needed to be left as is. I thought if I do anything more, it's going to be lost.

Patricia - That's brave, to make a big painting where it's tilting towards not being finished and on the edge. However, this painting is finished and thought out.

Donna - Yes, sometimes it's fun to be on the edge.

*Between It All*, 2021  
Oil on linen  
24 x 22 inches



*Next to You*, 2021  
Oil on linen  
40 x 30 inches



*Round Lake, 2021*  
Oil on linen  
20 x 16 inches



*Under the Catalpa, 2021*  
Oil on linen  
30 x 40 inches



*Something New*, 2021  
Acrylic on linen  
59 x 47.5 inches





*Night Souls*, 2021  
Oil on linen  
20 x 16 inches



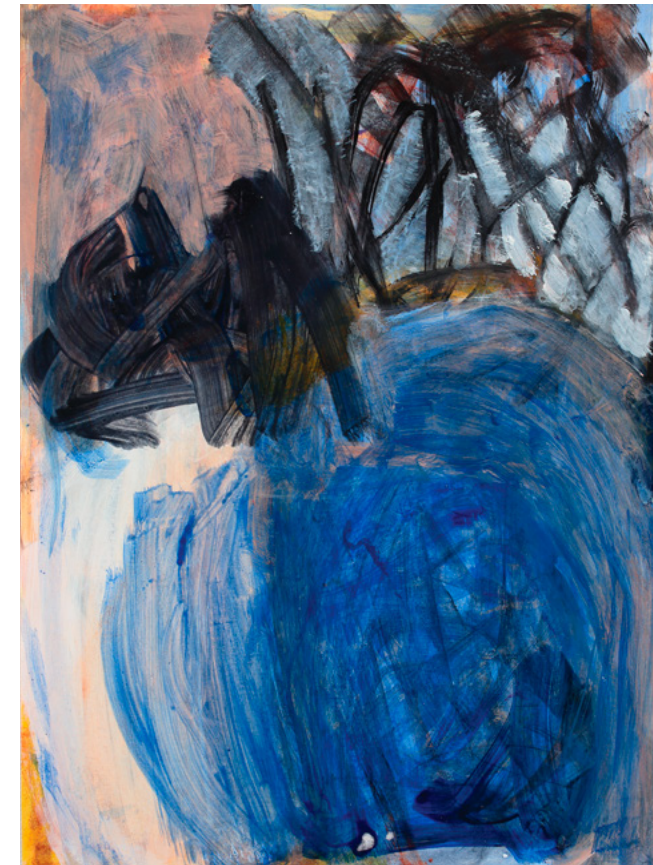
*Under the Catalpa 2, 2020*  
Oil on linen  
32 x 24 inches



*Take a Walk 1*, 2020 (Left)  
Acrylic and graphite on paper  
12 x 9 inches



*Take a Walk 2*, 2020 (Right)  
Acrylic and graphite on paper  
12 x 9 inches



*Take a Walk 3*, 2020 (Left)  
Acrylic and graphite on paper  
12 x 9 inches

*Take a Walk 4*, 2020 (Right)  
Acrylic and graphite on paper  
12 x 9 inches



*Take a Walk 5, 2020 (Left)*  
Acrylic and graphite on paper  
12 x 9 inches

*Take a Walk 6, 2020 (Right)*  
Acrylic and graphite on paper  
12 x 9 inches



## Donna Scarpa

Soon after graduating with a BFA in Fine Arts and Textile Design from The Fashion Institute of Technology Donna moved to New York in her 20's and started her career as a textile designer. Donna continued to pursue her dreams of becoming a professional artist and furthered her studies in painting and drawing. She attended The School of Visual Arts, The National Academy of Design, The Art Students League of New York, and The Green Studio School in NYC and Assisi, Italy. Scarpa has exhibited in New York and Connecticut and most recently at The Painting Center in the exhibition *Ensemble: Together Again* in 2020. She was one of four curators in the show *Truth, Beauty, Freedom and Love* at The Painting Center in 2021. Donna has shown her work in NY at The Garrison Art Center, The Art Society of Kingston, The Mamaroneck Artists Guild, and in Connecticut at the Stamford Art Association and The Center for Contemporary Printmaking in Norwalk. In 2018, Donna curated several shows at the BIZG87 Gallery in Larchmont, NY. The shows titled *Color Speaks: Exploring the Language of Color*, *Inspired Journeys Through Art*, and *Facts and Ambiguities* culminated in one of the paintings from these shows to be currently hanging in the NY State Senate Leader's Office in Albany. Donna has had her work published in *Balanced Rock - The North Salem Review of Art/Photography/Literature*. Donna Scarpa is also listed in *Art in America*, The Annual Guide 2021-2022. Scarpa's artwork is privately collected and she lives and works in Ridgefield, Connecticut.

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Special thanks to Patricia Spergel for my interview and for the delightful studio visit. Thank you to my husband Aldo Scarpa for the love and support that you give to me. Many thanks to all of my cherished family and friends for being on the artistic journey with me. This exhibit is in memory of my dear and very long-time friend Nancy Gendimenico 1953-2021.



