



Artist Roberta Ahrens at work.

The Architecture of Nature

Artist **Roberta Ahrens** has always had an affinity for the shapes, forms and colors in nature. “[It’s] what I choose to call nature’s architecture,” says Ahrens. Her career as a fine artist began 35 years ago when she arrived in San Francisco and leaped into the world of decorative painting and finishing. Initially, she worked on commissioned assignments for high-end corporate locations such as the Westin St. Francis, Macy’s Union Square and Harry Denton’s in San Francisco.

In 2005, she began to develop her unique style of fine art painting, working on her own handmade cracked linen canvases, pursuing universal themes of beauty, nature and peace. She paints primarily in acrylics and watercolors, and then carves the pieces, etching lines into the plaster. Through her work she hopes to convey the inherent beauty of the natural world. “In a world that seems to be devolving into ugliness and divisiveness, there is a deep value in calling attention to the inherent beauty of the structure and balance of nature,” she says. “Whether it comes from the heart of a flower in a garden, or the force of a wave rolling in from across the Pacific, the rhythms of nature carry a power I seek to convey to the world through the work I produce in my studio.”



The Petaluma artist often works in a large-scale format, producing fine art botanicals as well as a variety of commissioned artworks. “When I work on commissioned pieces, I call myself a translator, as I actively seek to combine the client’s vision with my own interpretation of the structure and balance of nature,” she says.

Currently, Ahrens is intrigued by the forms and structures that manifest themselves in bodies of water, and she’s at work on a plaster-and-fiber water series. “I started by pushing my most familiar materials of plaster, applied to fiber or fabric, to the limit. What I found, working large scale, was the form in its simplicity, inherently expresses a feeling of the power of water in all its forms. Standing before it evokes that feeling. There is a deep sense of movement, strength and beauty.”

Ahrens will participate in the Sonoma County Art Trails open studio tour event in October. For more information, visit www.RobertaAhrens.com. A documentary on Ahrens, “Invitation to the Mystery,” produced and directed by Thom E. Butler was completed in the spring and will be released as part of an artist film series entitled “Vocabulary of Expression.” For more information, go to www.vocabularyofexpression.com/mystery/.



Explore, Engage & Collect

Sonoma County Art Trails celebrates its 35th anniversary this autumn. A Sonoma County tradition, this premier juried open studio event will take place during the second and third weeks of October. This year, 140 artists will participate in the program.

The open studio tours give visitors the opportunity to explore Sonoma County roads, engage directly with the artists and see the studios where they work, and collect unique and one-of-a-kind pieces.

The Art Trails experience begins in early September with mini previews of the exhibit at various locations: Friday, Sept. 6 at Corrick’s in Santa Rosa; Saturday, Sept. 14, Gallery One in Petaluma; and on Friday, Sept. 20, at Fulton Crossings in Fulton. The main preview event will be held on Friday, Sept. 27, at the Sebastopol Center for the Arts from 6 to 8 p.m. Guests can preview the art from each artist, which will include painting, print-making, sculpture, ceramics, fiber arts, fine jewelry, photography, woodworking and more. The open studio event will be held October 12-13 and October 19-20 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day of the event. For more information, visit www.sonomacountyarttrails.com.