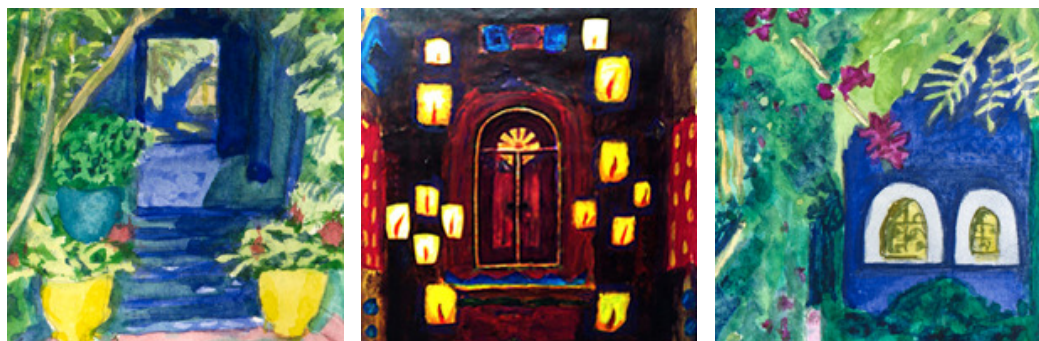




SHOW & TELL MARILYN MILLER



(From the left: Paintings: Jardin Majorelle 3, Luminieres, Jardin Majorelle 4)

Marilyn Miller: Artist and Art Therapist

"People say that what we are seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think this is what we're really seeking. I think what we're seeking is an experience of being alive."
Joseph Campbell.

I was born in Portugal, living there and in Malaysia as a child, which may account for my love of travel. As an only child, living in many different places, before settling in Somerset, art was a good and constant companion.

I am inspired by how people live their life and weave art and colour into it, so travelling, seeing new places, meeting new people and making art about it are some of the things that make me feel alive.

I have made art in many different settings - in the sun by a creek in New Zealand, on a wall, sketching cows in India, and among the red and ochre mesas of Ghost Ranch in New Mexico. I might work at home, alone, or in a studio full of art materials, immersed in a communal creative atmosphere. As an art therapist, I sometimes make art alongside people that I am working with, not absorbed, but keeping company in the same visual language, and make use of my own images in supervision.

Although this way of working can feel very dispersed, when I look back over my work there are themes running through it, so I have learned to accept the nomadic nature of how my "studio" is wherever I happen to be. Shaun McNiff, suggests that

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this may be familiar to many art therapists, valuing the creativity and stimulus of this way of working, and exploring the further possibilities of the "virtual studio" (McNiff, 2000:91).

Here are recurrent themes of windows and doorways, of travel and home, of darkness and light. Doorways and windows, often colourful and decorative, tell us something of a place, while the experience of living there is somewhere beyond, accessible only if we are invited inside.

I also enjoy coming home, the pleasure of treasured familiar places and people, sharing these with my own guests and visitors, has inspired work too.



"Painting makes me feel alive" on green. Acrylic on paper



"Painting makes me feel alive" on red. Acrylic on paper

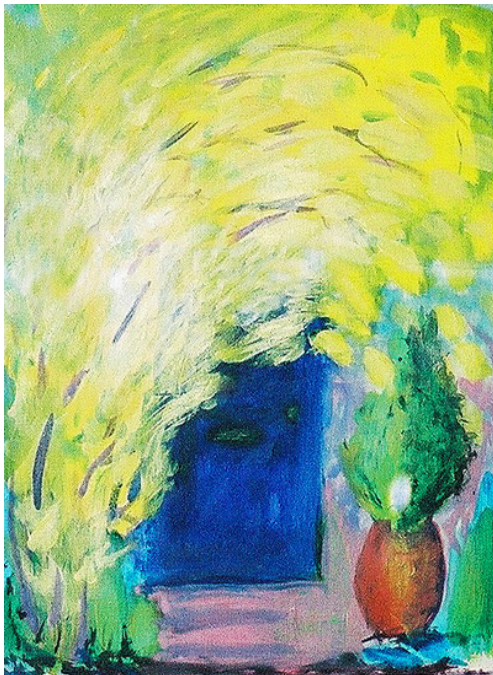
1. & 2. "Painting makes me feel alive" These are about the sheer pleasure and joy of moving paint around on paper, the delight of the colours, the alchemy that happens as they mix together, the spontaneity and energy released and the soothing qualities as paint is smoothed or shaped. I worked with cutout outlines of my own hands, then painting with a brush, although it is a similar effect to finger-painting. It was all very playful. I was preparing for a solo exhibition in New Zealand (see below) so it was also a way of contacting some energy and ideas for this.

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3. " Pacific Blue" Acrylic on paper

This is from the exhibition "Colourful Experiences", at Artspost Community Art Gallery in Hamilton, New Zealand, 2001. As Artist in Residence, I ran workshops around this theme for the local community and studied Pacific culture as part of my MA, The Arts in Society.



4. "The Blue Door" Acrylic

While walking on a wintry day, having felt very short of energy, I noticed this burst of yellow, announcing the arrival of Spring, new life and hope.

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5. "Home" Mixed media on paper

Sometimes I play around with colour and paint before I know what is coming. "Home" began this way, as an area in a group painting. Someone said that it looked welcoming, and I realised that that was how I wanted my own home to feel, and developed the idea into a painting.



6. "The Pink House" Acrylic

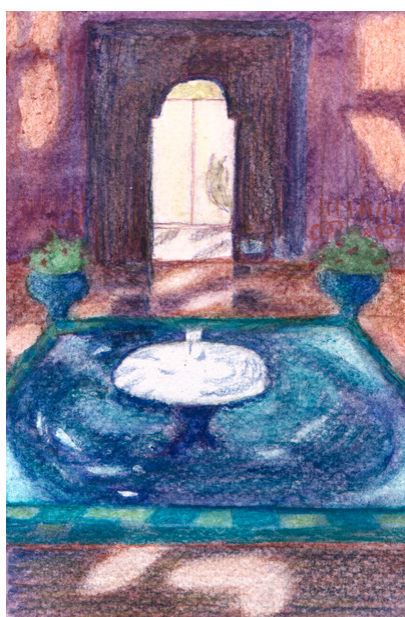
I was fascinated by a house in Goa that I passed everyday on the way to the beach, wondering who lived there and what it was like inside, imagining a life lived from such a place. It also reminded me of the house that my parents had lived in, a 1930s semi, painted pink.



7. "Starry night, Tacheddirt" Watercolour postcard
Sometimes the journey is the artwork too. I marked reaching 50 with a trek across Morocco's Atlas Mountains, sending watercolour postcards from the journey.



8. "Souk Scene , Marrakesh"
I loved the vibrant colour of Morocco's markets and the cool interior gardens. Both Watercolour and Aquarelle Crayon on watercolour paper.

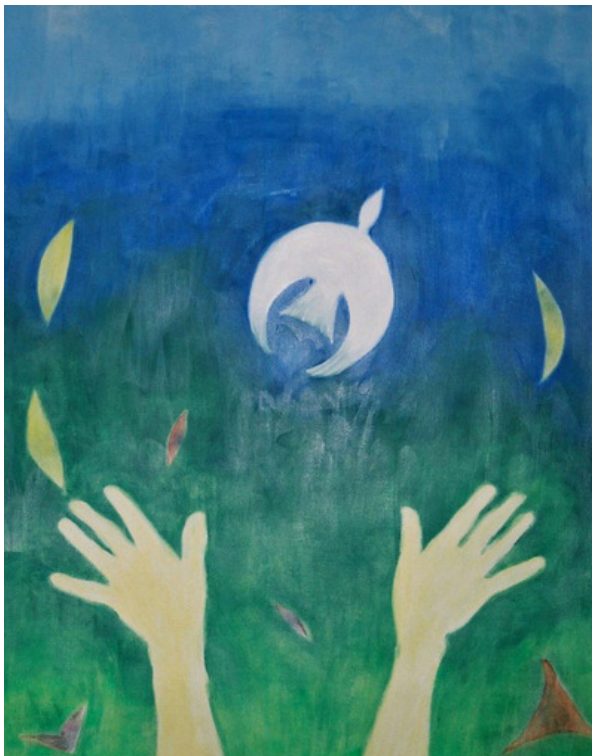


9. "Cool Blue fountain"

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10. "Luminaires", Acrylic and collage on paper
Luminaires (lanterns) lighting up dark November nights around an old church, and memories of New Mexico, combined to make this painting.



11. "Haere ra" Acrylic
Travel also involves leaving, and goodbyes. This painting came from Maori phrases for farewells in my Lonely Planet guide to New Zealand:

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"Haera ra" from the person staying to the person going,
"E noho ra", from the person going to the person staying.



12. "Winter fire".
Pastel it's good to be home.

I exhibit regularly with a group of artist/art therapist colleagues.

I am planning to visit New Zealand and Taiwan or Thailand in 2009 and welcome contact from anyone interested in my work.

References

Joseph Campbell in Ferris, T. The 4-hour Work Week (2007) Vermillion UK

McNiff, S (2000) in Art Therapy and Computer Technology, Malchiodi, C. London: Jessica Kingsley.

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