

JENNIFER MOSES

Walking With Grace

By Brandon Rosas



Walking with grace has become a way of life for landscape artist Jennifer Moses. “I have always had an affinity for the word,” she says. “For me, grace encapsulates so many other words. It exists in all things that are in their purest, natural state.”

Moses’ fascination with things in their natural state might have begun in Virginia. She and her family moved there from Kansas when she was 3 years old. Her father Mike was in the Army Reserve and

was assigned to Fort Eustace Army Base for advanced training. There, Moses and her sister Krista enjoyed spending summers waterskiing on the Warwick River and winters skiing in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Her mother Gwen, a schoolteacher, enrolled both daughters in ballet, piano, and drawing classes.

“I think she was just trying to see what would stick,” Moses says. “She was a bit of a creative person herself and painted a little here and there.”

Solitude, Lake Casitas, oil, 28" by 32"

“This painting, the moon captured over Lake Casitas, was inspired by my love for Japanese woodblock prints, in particular the work of Hiroshi Yoshida. Beautifully designed simplified shapes, repeated patterns, linework, and subtle muted pigments still rich with color were the touchstones for my creative process.”

Moses’ naturally quiet nature lent itself well to spending time alone and focusing on art, and she



Spirited, oil, 26" by 28"

"I find myself drawn to the simplicity within nature. Virginia's cloud-filled summer sunsets and expansive waters provide opportunities to explore and paint modern, minimal landscapes. The memories of my childhood spent on the Warwick River and Chesapeake Bay continue to influence my work."

knew from a young age that she wanted to do something creative with her life. After graduating from high school, she enrolled at Virginia Commonwealth University to study art education, despite her preference for staying behind the scenes.

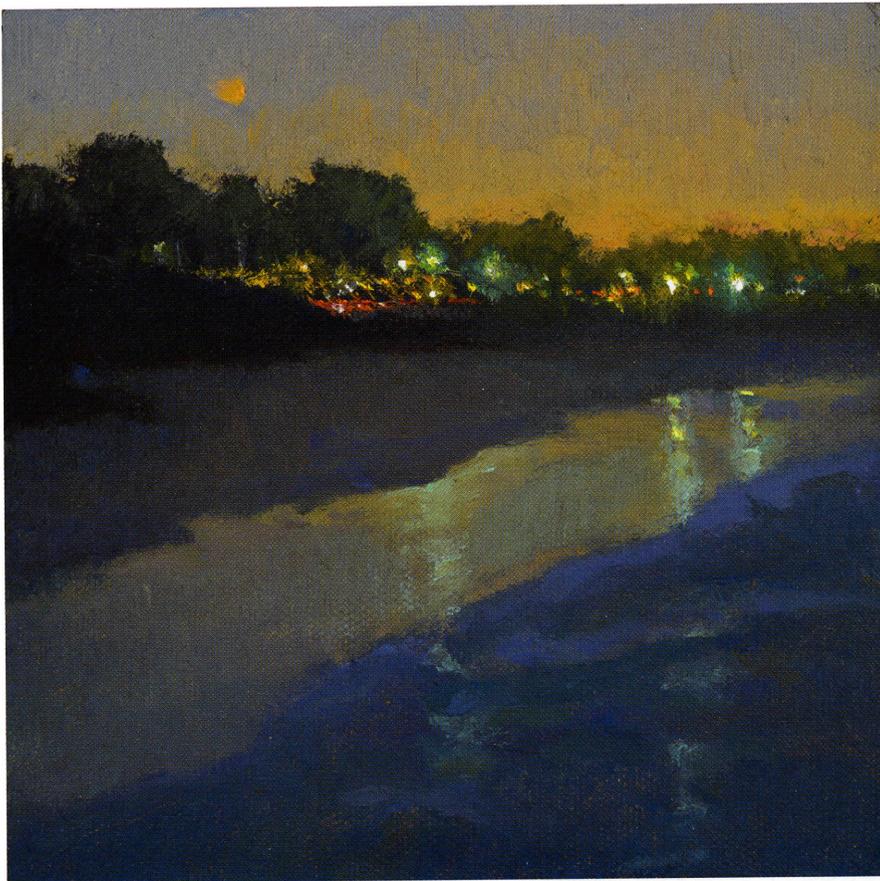
"We had to do student teaching our final year or two of school, and it became clear pretty quickly that teaching was not for me," Moses

says. "I took the classes I had to take for the major, but everything else was fine art."

After graduating from college in 1991, Moses moved to New York, where she connected with the contemporary art scene and painted abstract landscapes and a few figures in oils and mixed media. She also helped out in the studio of her friend, Sandi Sloane, an established

modern artist who gave Moses her first glimpse of the life of a working artist.

In 1994, Moses visited friends in Ojai, California, and was so taken with the area that she and her husband (they later divorced) purchased an historic Greene & Greene craftsman bungalow called the Pratt House. They then set out to restore the home to its former glory. "It was



Moonrise from the Pier, oil, 6" by 6"

"Location sketches are of the moment. They tend to feel alive, authentic, and direct. This was painted as the full blood moon ascended into the sky, and city lights danced on the wet sand and water below."



Timeless, oil, 16" by 20"

"Evanescence fascinates me. Painting a sunrise or sunset is like capturing a moment in motion. It becomes timeless. It becomes sharable."

a fun project, and my exposure to Japanese influence and the California Impressionists during that time influences my artwork even more now than before," says Moses.

Two years later, Moses became pregnant, which temporarily limited the time and energy she could dedicate to the restoration project but, after her son Will was born, she quickly got back into the creative process. She took photography classes at nearby Ventura Community College and, inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement furniture that filled her home, launched a business making handcrafted garden pottery with a friend. "There was so much design associated with the furniture and art from that period that I gravitated towards and wanted to reflect in my own work," she says.

In 2000, while visiting a small gallery in Ojai, Moses encountered the work of Dan Pinkham, whose modern twist on the early California Impressionist style of painting resonated with her. "It felt like there was something symbolic to his work, and it was more emotive than just a location," she says. "At the time, I couldn't really put words to it but, when I talk about my own work now, I kind of describe it in the same way."

The following year, Moses purchased a new home in Ojai and converted the freestanding garage into a dedicated studio space. From there, she embarked on a course of self-study, collecting books on the early California Impressionists and copying the works of artists from the early 1900s. "I basically just painted and painted and painted, knowing that eventually I wanted to find a mentor or teacher," she says.

Before she could do so, she discovered the Ojai Studio Artists. "It was the first group in California that would open its studios and let the public tour them," she says.

Moses joined the group and went on to serve as its president from 2006 to 2008. "It provided some of my first experiences exhibiting landscapes in the more traditional impressionistic style," she says.

In 2007, while attending the 96th Annual Gold Medal exhibition of the



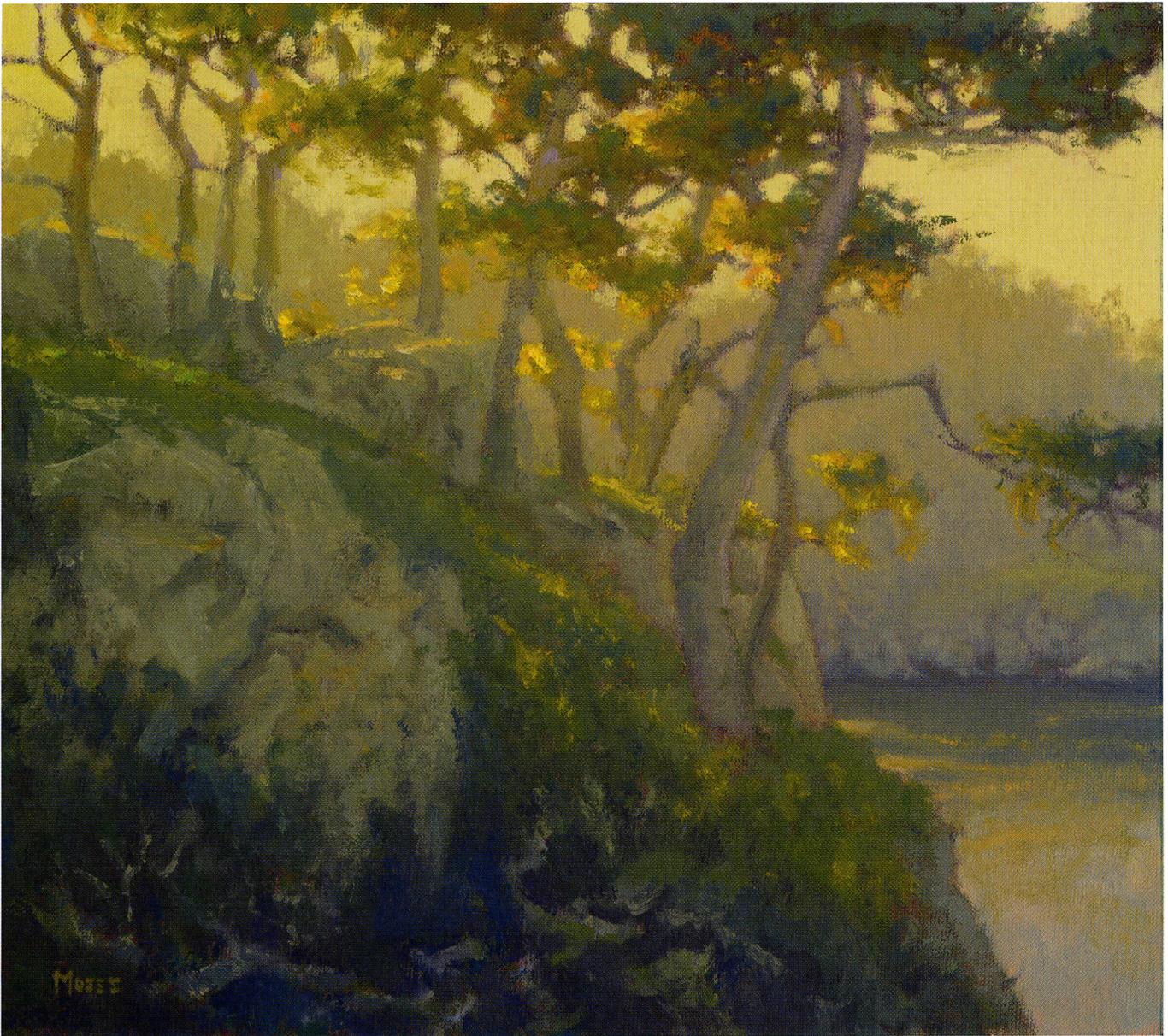
Aerial Flight, oil, 26” by 24”

“Fireworks, an aerial celebration of shimmering explosions, burst across the night sky. With each explosion, a magnificent display of shapes and lights appears at the pinnacle in a rainbow of colors, falling and fading into darkness, leaving behind a swirling cloud of smoke. There is something ethereal and mysterious about them. Capturing these fleeting aerial acts is a celebration of the human spirit.”

California Art Club, Moses crossed paths with Pinkham. Although he was not teaching at the time, he connected her with another notable landscape painter, David C. Gallup.

Moses began to study with Gallup and to deepen her understanding of color theory and design. Within two years she was assisting Gallup as he taught his classes.

In time, Moses found her way into several galleries and was accepted as a member of the California Art Club, an organization that listed among its early members several of



Summer Light, Blue Fish Cover, oil, 10" by 11"

"Point Lobos State Natural Reserve retains the feeling of an ancient coastal landscape. Decades of artists and photographers have been inspired to capture its beauty and grandeur. Artist Francis McComas described the point as the 'greatest meeting of land and water in the world.' This painting embodies one day by one artist attempting to capture this beauty and grandeur."

her early California Impressionist heroes. "I was just persistent, and doors kept opening," she says.

Moses hit her stride in 2014 when the large twilight skyscape she had entered in the club's 103rd Gold Medal Exhibition at the Autry Museum won the Edgar Payne Award for Best Landscape. "All the practice and experimenting just clicked, and I felt like I had my own voice and

knew where I wanted to go with my work," she says.

Unlike her early work, Moses' paintings today are marked by a definite intent. "I think of myself as more of a symbolist artist," she says. "For me, painting is about the expression of an idea rather than a realistic depiction of the landscape, and I'm creating more of an emotional experience rather than paint-

ing the place itself." In order to do that, Moses edits down the information in her subjects to depict the essence of a place in its purest state.

Moses' paintings often feature a sense of calmness, which is important to her worldview. "I think, as a human race, we tend to take ourselves too seriously and make things important that aren't," she says. "We need to learn to have some levity



Golden Moment, oil, 24" by 38"

"As I crested the ride into the Ojai Valley, the last light of the setting sun raked across the mountains below. The moon, beginning its climb into the evening sky, was sublime and magical. It was golden."



and not be so reactive, to sit with the quiet, to sit with the still."

With that philosophy, it's somewhat surprising that fireworks are a consistent source of inspiration for Moses. The idea came about when a friend posted a video of fireworks

that was edited to look like an old movie. "I thought, 'Oh, that might be really cool to paint,'" says Moses, who created one piece that, much like a pyrotechnic rocket, quickly turned into several more pieces.

Even in these explosive displays, however, Moses finds and celebrates stillness. "They usually aren't about a lot of crazy lights going off," she says. "They're about one gesture, or one rocket, or the moment just before or after an explosion."

Moses is always excited to start working on her next painting. "Taking a risk or doing something different excites me, as does having somebody creative to share it with," she says, referring to her partner, Chris, who is a professional framer. The couple enjoys collaborating on artistic work and simply living a creative

life together.

"When we eat, we sometimes watch conversion videos on how to make our 1998 Land Cruiser into a van for traveling," Moses says. "Chris is a cyclist, and a dream of ours is to take off in the car so he can ride his bike, and I can go explore."

Regardless of where she goes, it is clear that as long as Moses continues to walk with grace, she will find new subjects to celebrate. "If you're really present in your life and world, then there's opportunity to see past the obvious and find inspiration everywhere," she says. 

Brandon Rosas lives in Parnell, Iowa.