



Digital Mosaic

Where the Ancient Faith + 21st century media merge

Painting with the colours of Creation



By Chris Vlahonasios

Founder & Director

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Angelica Sotiriou is a visual artist from San Pedro in California, USA. As an Orthodox Christian, Angelica's art is a vivid expression of her Faith. Using abstract and surreal forms, she originally started off drawing and painting with graphite and acrylics, but moved towards sculpture. Then after many years she returned to her first love of colour and line on large canvases. Having been a teacher and lecturer for 39 years, Angelica finally decided to dedicate herself to what she truly loved. She established her own studio and has been painting for over 20 years. Her work has been exhibited at many renowned galleries across the USA and forms the private collections of some very prominent people, including blockbuster film and TV producer, Jerry Bruckheimer.

What was your upbringing like?

I was raised in a Greek Orthodox family. My father was born in Pireaus and my mother was a first generation Greek born to parents from Kefalonia. We were wholesale flower farmers. My youth was spent working in the family business surrounded by acres of multi coloured fields of rows and rows of asters... Intensely



Visual artist Angelica Sotiriou creates abstract-surreal, contemplative works of art that reflect on her personal relationship with the Divine.

coloured salmon pink, purple, pink, lavender, rose pinks, shades of greens and blues were my visual field and colours became recorded memory. We were in a constant relationship with the weather... rain, wind and sun determined how healthy the crops would grow and eventually be sold at the flower market in downtown Los Angeles. We were saturated in the mystical rhythm of nature and connected in a way that imprinted on the

heart of a young introspective artist. My senses were richly fed.

Why did you choose to blend Orthodoxy into your art?

I do not see my Orthodoxy as a blend or a choice... it is how I breathe, how my heart beats, who I am in Christ. My paintings have become what I pray, as in Luke 12:34: "For where your treasure is there your heart will be also." As a young artist my sculptures were often of the interior angst I had at being a woman raised in a traditional family and the longing to choose the path of an artist. As I grew into young motherhood my work was about polarities and the angst of losing my artist self to a husband and to my children as a wife and mother. As my children grew so did my need to pray more and to hold onto trusting in the Will of God. As my prayer life increased so my work changed... instead of youthful angst and searching for definitions, my works became all about my relationship with my internal world and relationship with God.

Your artist statement describes your recent drawings and paintings as "a personal journey of uncovering and revealing pathways, windows and portals of light and of spirit." What does this mean?

My paintings are large, the average size is 8'x 4'. The process of painting them becomes a tango of sorts. The works take much energy and broad strokes. They are like painted choreographies. The paintings are large like giant windows and doorways that I must pass through... I constantly work on creating and attempting to bring light out of the painted surface. I am always humbled and made small in the presence of the enormous size of each canvas. The process becomes a relationship and the canvas becomes a dimensional space that I have entered. Each painting I do has been inspired by passages from scripture, or a phrase or prayer that touches me during Divine Liturgy, or a perspective of the writings of the Holy Mothers and Fathers, or what I take to prayer. Sometimes it is something as simple as the incense that rises or the image of the hundreds of beeswax candles lit in the Holy Sepulchre, or how the light enters through the stained glass images and shines on the iconostasis... all the images settle into my visual memory bank and become these wordless illustrations of the sublime. As I work on the sketch of the idea/concept I do my homework and explore more deeply the concept with more Orthodox reading, more prayers and approaching my Father Confessor with clarifying questions. As I work on the painting, more questions arise that await answers and sometimes the work itself answers them for me. When a work is complete I am often surprised at all that I learned and how I spiritually grew in the process of creating my work. It is a grace and always this process humbles me. I guess the Lord knows how to make me listen and how I am to learn!

What are some examples of your 'contemplative narrative paintings'?

I have a portfolio of two hundred or more works, but my most recent works in the last decade have become more illustrative of my interior world. I will take for example the last ten paintings I have done in sequence. I finished a work called "Mary's Yes" and it is an abstract illustration of the moment the Theotokos says 'Yes' to the Lord. The image is the fusion of the very moment when the Holy Spirit and Mary's 'Yes' became one. The painting is vertically large and begs the viewer to look up to the point where the viewer's neck strains to see the swirl of wings and spirit above the beam of golden light that descends into the swirls of amber, pink and blue living embrace. Or the painting I did of "Sin and Grace" where sin is this viscous, undulating and di

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