

# On the Cover

*Portions of the following are based on an interview with the artist on March 3, 2007.*

The Gulf of Mexico sparkles like diamonds. Colorful pennants announcing the art show flutter in a salt sea breeze. Sunlight reflects off the white canvas of a hundred booths displaying art from all over the Southeast. Among the riot of color that is Florida art, one booth stands out like a gem. The paintings of the artist Linda Sasse please the eye with deep colors from nature—emerald, topaz, ruby, and sapphire. The panhandle of Florida is a part-time home for Sasse. When not residing at their beachfront home or traveling (which they love to do), Linda and Ed Sasse can be found in Brookfield, Wisconsin, where they have lived since 1970.

Many of the images in Sasse's art derive from her roots in the Deep South. She was born and attended school in Mississippi. Art was not offered in her high school, so she drew and painted with no instruction—she just liked putting color on the page. Her mother and her mother's five sisters majored in English in college, so Sasse did too. No one suggested that she might major in art at the University of Mississippi. Knowing that she did not want to teach, she became a secretary and worked in medical schools while her husband earned his PhD in biochemistry. When they moved to Wisconsin, a friend told her about Cardinal Stritch College. Sasse was excited by the art on the walls there and knew it was the place for her to take art classes; in fact, she continued training in art there for 15 years. Her very first class was weaving, and she still remembers learning a technique of Maori weaving. The chair of the department, a nun known for her art, was honored by *Life* magazine on its cover.

Sasse says the classes were inspiring because there were new things to learn all the time. For her, art was all about color—how it expresses so much—and for many years she painted just because she liked doing it. That changed when she began exhibiting in shows and galleries, which provided her with a focus and a goal. Color continued to intrigue her and led her to abstract painting. Many of her abstract images feel like landscapes, with verdant patches of green, deep-water blues, and tawny golds. She feels that color on canvas can be exciting and does not have to be *about* something. She quickly learned though that one cannot just splash on paint and hope it works; artists still have to use the principles of art in creating abstracts.

Sasse says, "I paint almost daily and enjoy using rich acrylic paints in both colorful abstract paintings and more

realistic impressionist ones, always with the thought of producing dramatic, vibrant, and uplifting images." Her images are gathered from traveling, especially in Latin America, from memories of growing up in the South, and from everyday observations. Her favorite line of poetry, Tennyson's "I am a part of all that I have met," is often in her thoughts as she absorbs the sights, moods, and colors around her and puts them on canvas.

Sasse has two series of paintings, *Under the Sycamore* and *Saturday Afternoon*, that harken back to her years growing up in the South. The same women appear in all the paintings of these series. They are the women of the Mississippi Delta, ladies who work all week and on the weekend put on housedresses and go to market. Sasse says she paints the kerchiefs and scarves on their heads so the viewer can see a more interesting view from the back. She almost always paints the women standing with their backs to the viewer or walking away. *Three Ladies With Blue Purses* presents the women facing the viewer, and of the more than 100 paintings she has done in these series, this is the only one of her works in which the women face the viewer. Sasse feels that when viewers cannot see the women's faces, they can project the faces they want. Sasse likes to think of the women in her paintings as hanging out with each other, telling each other the things that are important or not so important. She wishes she could hear what they are saying.

Sasse remembers the day she painted *Three Ladies With Blue Purses*. The colors drove her: the yellow background and vivid dresses. She took artistic license with the trees and sky to obtain more color. She wanted to portray the white-hot middle of summer, the heat radiating from the road, the plowed fields behind the ladies in their languid poses. Even their shadows look hot. The women are outside because they have to get where they are going. She painted them with bare feet because even though in reality they would have had shoes on, the bare feet speak to the rural Southern experience.

Sasse is currently experimenting with even more color in both her abstracts and her series of ladies. She is also experimenting with subject matter and has painted several images of highly colorful mules. As she says, "It doesn't matter *what* you paint—it's *how* you paint it."

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