

ON THE COVER

Vineland Near Ventura, Right Bank Looking East by Randy N. Sandel

This article is based on a video interview with the artist on July 22, 2024.

The oil painting on this month's cover of *American Psychologist* portrays a house in the highlands overlooking Los Angeles, California. Those who have visited this area will recognize that the painting captures the winding roads and impressive homes characteristic of these hills. Yet, more ominously, the colors in the picture, yellows, violets, and greens, with a smoky hazy cast, and the shapes and positioning of the trees, remind us of fires and of the devastating impact that forest fires have had on the North American continent this year and in recent years. On the left side of the painting is part of the Los Angeles River system, concrete aqueducts designed to help manage and preserve the environment.

The impact of global warming, including fires and floods, is an important theme in Randy Sandel's work. Her passion is working with color. Interestingly, Sandel indicates that, although she readily used color in her work, early in her career, she did not understand it. Her strength was in drawing. As a young "starving artist," living in a small apartment, her eureka moment for understanding color came when she had to step backward into her closet, losing her balance, and falling on her shoes. In this way, she gained sufficient distance from her work to understand the complexities and power of color. Since that time, she has found that she uses color liberally and changes palettes readily to capture her images and evolve her style, focusing on "getting the image out there" organically.

Sandel is a lifelong resident of the San Fernando Valley in Southern California. She is also a lifelong artist, having been identified at age 5 as having artistic talent. She describes a career shaped in part by coming of age before the feminist movements of the 1970s. At that time, it was common for

women who attended college to do so to have a "backup," with the presumption that one would marry and raise children, but not pursue a long-term career.

Sandel attended the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) with plans to study archeology and majored in Latin. She became interested in Greek vase painting and was encouraged by a fellow student from the art department taking the same class to become an artist. Appreciative of her parents' acceptance of her interest and talent in art, she continued her education at UCLA, earning a Master of Fine Arts in painting and printmaking. She describes graduate study in art as highly competitive and critical, creating a "sink or swim" environment where most students did not survive to become artists. She attributes her eventual successes, in part, to the encouragement of friends who identified her talents and encouraged her to persist through challenging times. Also, her father, who himself persevered through the Great Depression and did not have the opportunity to pursue his youthful aspirations to be a lawyer, had recently become a detective. Hence, he was increasingly understanding that it was important to do what you love, rather than what was practical.

Now an accomplished artist with many exhibitions across the state of California, teaching was one of Sandel's favorite activities. Beginning as a graduate teaching assistant at UCLA, she has regularly taught art courses at local colleges, specifically San Fernando Valley College and Harbor College. She values the connections that she maintains with former students and is proud that some of them have become successful artists.

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