

# 'Eclectic elements singing together'

Kim Sobel loves the art of painting

by Mara Dresner  
Correspondent



Kim Sobel usually works on 10 to 20 paintings at a time.



Although she grew up immersed in art, Kim Sobel didn't make the "real, true commitment in saying I was actually an artist" until she was in her 20s.

"I was really nervous," she said. "I was always doing projects. I think I was scared. If you're an artist, how do you live? One day I woke up and said, 'I have to make art.'"

Sobel, who was living in New York City at the time, made the switch from being an elementary school teacher to painting full time.

Photo by Mara Dresner

She was also driving a truck for a service that delivered paintings. "That's when things shifted," she said.

Living in a loft above a factory that made belts, she found herself using belt loops, jute and gravel to "push paint."

"Any way but with a brush," she said. "It seems in some ways I was moving toward sculpture. But I'm a 2-D person. I can't think any other way."

While she has worked in other mediums, she said, paint is her first love. "I love the smell. I love the touch," she said.

She finds it "fascinating to see how people respond to her paintings.

"Everyone responds differently. ... Everyone brings their own visual history and that affects what you see," she said. "Some people see it as really beautiful; some people see it as really ugly; some people see it as really aggressive. You have to work to look at these paintings. They're very giving. Some are quieter; they're still complex."

She said it typically takes six months to complete a painting,

although it can take as long as several years. She usually has 10 to 20 pieces in progress at any one time.

"I'm always searching for what the piece is supposed to be," she said.

"I don't like to say the paint talks. ... My job is to draw it out, rather than to impose. My imposing often destroys."

Sobel works out of a three-car garage that's been converted into a bright artist's studio. An elliptical machine and two rocking chairs are the only non-typical studio items. Sobel said that sometimes when the ideas don't come, she'll come to the studio and just work out.

"I try to do a minimum of

an hour a day. On beautiful days, [I put in] five or eight hours in my studio," she said. "At night, if I'm painting enough, I see



Kim Sobel's "Fencing the Sky."

Photo courtesy of Kim Sobel

colors when I close my eyes." She starts by using acrylic paints and finishes with oils.

Living in South Glastonbury has changed the style of her work.

"Nature is a big component," she said. When she living in the city, she said her work was "harsher. Now, it's more flowing."

Working from her home, she continues to work for the company that she once delivered paintings for, but now in a management position. The company has three divisions, based in New York and California, all providing fine arts services, and has grown in size from 10 employees to 48.

Sobel has taught at Manchester Community College and at The New School and Hunter College, both in New York, among others. She's exhibited in numerous solo and group shows, in places such as Connecticut, Kentucky, New York, Vermont and Germany.

"[Kim] is a painter in the tradition of the great early adventurers, those who were driven to explore new worlds regardless of the peril they might face," said Susan Classen-Sullivan, artist, and fine art professor and director/curator of the galleries at Manchester Community College. "It seems a requirement

of her work that each passage it contains is new and runs abreast to [her] requirements to both discover and reveal. The painting folds color, mark-making and form through and into one another as a means of explaining the process of knowing through layers of experience both subtle and acute, and the ever-present desire to do so. Because the work is in continual visual motion, it is alive and continually questions spontaneity of experience, nature and conscious intent.”

In 2014, Sobel will be doing an installation on “The Wall” at the Charter Oak Cultural Center in Hartford, in the sanctuary lobby. The dates are still to be determined.

Janice LaMotta, the center’s artistic director, said it’s a 9-foot-high by 16-foot-wide space. Proposals were solicited “to create an installation that treats the entire wall surface and doesn’t approach it as a traditional gallery wall,” she said.

“I have always enjoyed working with Kim; she is professional, serious and organized,” LaMotta said.

“I respond to the qualities in her work that remind me of some of the early Modernists, like Charles

visceral quality. I never tire of the lush forms, expressive gestures and the lush rich colors and the special depth that she achieves in her paintings.

Photo courtesy of Kim Sobel



“Anticipated Kiss” is one of Kim Sobel’s new paintings.

Birchfield and Arthur Dove and how they painted the organic impulses of nature. Kim’s work has a terrific,

At Charter Oak we present a rich and varied exhibition schedule of artists from diverse cultures as well as provide opportunities to the many talented artists who live and work in Connecticut. Whether it is art that gives voice to social justice issues, art that celebrates cultural heritage or art that explores new materials, themes and concepts, all of the work opens our eyes to new ways of seeing and experiencing the world around us.”

Sobel noted that “the history of painting is throughout every paint I make,” including influences from the Hudson School, Renaissance, Surrealism and Abstract Expressionism.

“There’s definitely a Rorschach effect in my work. There’s also a letting go,” she said “It’s really eclectic elements singing together.” **GL**

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