

DRAWN TO nature's DETAILS

North Brookfield artist brings fresh perspective to plein air painting

BY NANCY SHEEHAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTINE PETERSON

There is an old saying that dragonflies are the form angels take when they want you to be able to see them. If that's half as true as it is charming, then the angelic realm apparently really wanted to catch Robin Reynolds' attention.

The artist, whose oil-on-board paintings inspired by flowers have drawn wide praise, recalled during an interview last summer, when the garden at her North Brookfield home was in full bloom, an unusual interaction with a dragonfly she had years ago.

Reynolds said that, during graduate school at the Savannah College of Art and Design, she was painting outside at a nearby nature preserve. As she worked among the Spanish moss-draped trees, a dragonfly landed on her arm and stayed there for the better part of an hour.

"It would fly off and come back a few times, back and forth, but it stayed there while I was painting," Reynolds said. "I remember telling my mom and she knew

this sort of 'spiritual' person who told her, 'Oh, that means good spirits are coming in.' I never paint animals, but I thought, 'All right. This is important.' So, I put the dragonfly in that painting."

If the winged creature was indeed some sort of emissary, the message likely was that Reynolds was in her element painting outside instead of within the confines of a studio. Plein air painting was still new to her at the time. It has since become her



A close-up of one of Reynolds' pieces.



Robin Reynolds does much of her painting in her own backyard in North Brookfield.

preferred practice, although her work has a more experimental aspect than you usually see in the landscape renderings of most artists who paint out in nature.

Reynolds' favorite subject is flowers, but that would likely not be your first impression of her work. Her large-scale, richly colored floral paintings are a focused, energetic and sometimes

whimsical evocation of the essence of nature rather than a faithful replication of the nasturtiums, snapdragons, dahlias, zinnias and other blooms that inspire her work.

"Her paintings take a new approach to traditional New England plein air painting, and are so very beautiful," Juliet Feibel, executive director

of ArtsWorcester, wrote in a proposal recommending a solo show for Reynolds. "The paintings hover in this wonderful space between realism and abstraction; you recognize the form and colors of flowers, but you also see the abstract patterns and layers she creates with them."

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