

Nicholas Pearce Open Studio November 2012

1.		<i>Ode to Gauguin</i> 30 x 40"	The rich tones of this dancer's skin, as well as her closed eyes, strongly evoked for me the exotic mystery of Gauguin's work. I captured the translucence of the shawl by using a white wash, the first time I'd used that technique.
2.		<i>Elegant Introspection</i> (copper leaf) 30 x 40"	I loved this understated pose, but the background absolutely refused to work, detracting from the elegance of the figure. I'd been experimenting with gold leaf on other paintings, and chose copper for this one, which balanced the highlights of arm and face.
3.		<i>Last Class</i> 40 x 30"	Many of my dancer paintings are done from reference photos taken during the classes I teach. Amity and Gloria danced for the last class ever given before Island Blue closed its Victoria studio.
4.		<i>Pendant</i> 40 x 30"	Up this close, a face becomes less about the person, and more about the interplay of shapes and light, as well as the unexpected colours – including green – that bring skin to life on the canvas.
5.		<i>Gathering Storm</i> 30 x 40"	This model brought intense energy to her session, which seemed to radiate from her body. The light reminded me of sun coming from behind a cumulonimbus cloud.
6.		<i>The Awakening</i> 30 x 40"	The strength of the profile inspired me to paint this image. I created a balancing strength in the background by using as few brushstrokes as possible to achieve the pattern and texture of the material.
7.		<i>The Stream of Life</i> 30 x 40"	This pose immediately struck me with its similarity to a meandering stream. The figure is compressed at the top of the canvas, and unfolds as it flows to the bottom.
8.		<i>Glow Fan</i> 30 x 40"	This painting is very much about backlighting. Leaving out the details of the fan captured the intensity of the light coming through it, providing a dramatic focal point to the work.

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9.		<i>Wing Display</i> 40 x 30"	I always paint in every detail of my photo reference, including all the subtleties. Then, if the painting calls for more simplicity, I paint them out. <i>Wing Display</i> is an example of the drama this technique can achieve.
10.		<i>Listening at the Curtain</i> 30 x 40"	The model's remarkable hair is the most striking component of this painting, but the background plays a crucial role in playing off and balancing the figure, supporting the composition.
11.		<i>New Moves</i> 24 x 36"	<i>New Moves</i> depicts modern flamenco, but the painting itself is all about balance, starting with the dancer balancing on one foot. The work echoes this with its balance of light and dark from top to bottom, and balance of negative space from left to right.
12.		<i>Pointed Toe</i> 30 x 40"	The geometry of the triangle, created by the pose of the figure, draws your eye through the figure down toward the lighted shoe, and then back again. The more freeform shapes in the background soften and complement the solidity of the triangle.
13.		<i>Red Velvet</i> 48 x 60"	I have painted four versions of this pose, and <i>Red Velvet</i> is the largest (and the only one still available). Out of interest, I compared images of the four, and was fascinated to see how much they differed in colour range. To my surprise, they each represented a season; this final <i>Red Velvet</i> is winter.
14.		<i>Watching</i> 40 x 30"	Having the majority of the focus on the extreme right creates an unusual dynamic in this painting. The flower on the left and the expanse of colour across the cheek creates the necessary balance.
15.		<i>Yellow Flower</i> (gold leaf) 30 x 40"	Originally this painting's background was a mottled yellow, and I wanted to change it up to something that would suit the image better. I chose gold leaf, with a dark outline for separation, which turns the gold into a separate element.
16.		<i>2 Illuminations</i> 40 x 30"	The two photo lamps illuminating this dancer from behind, giving a very strong halo outline of the figure. The challenge was to create the sense of the figure despite missing elements obliterated by the light.

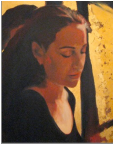



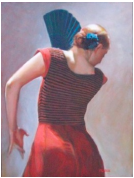
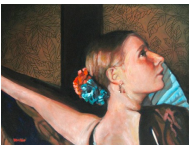
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17.		<i>In Front and Behind</i> 24 x 36"	The major element of this piece is the fan, and the name refers to the dancer's body enclosing it, in front and behind, creating organic and geometric shapes. The dancer's hand, splayed out, echoes the shape and state of the fan.
18.		<i>Hair</i> 30 x 40"	The texture of this dancer's hair has always fascinated me. The light plays across its delicate strands, creating intensely detailed highlights that contrast with areas of shadow that have no detail at all.
19.		<i>Beyond Reflection</i> (silver leaf) 30 x 40"	The silver leaf background was superimposed on the white table that was in the original photo but that jarred the senses on the canvas. Adding the silver leaf accentuated the directional thrust and transformed the awkward table into a shaft of light.
20.		<i>The Light from Behind</i> 40 x 30"	The subtle shapes in this painting's background on either side of the dancer, plus the glowing light under the arms and on the hair, accent her dramatic and lovely profile, and her contemplative look.
21.		<i>Shimmering</i> 30 x 40"	The pose in <i>Shimmering</i> is similar to that in <i>The Stream of Life</i> , but there the similarity ends. <i>Shimmering</i> is all about textures – fabric, skin, hair – and the geometric shapes that accentuate the organic shapes of the figure.
22.		<i>Throwing Off the Shackles</i> 30 x 40"	I love the diagonal line created by the robe across the hips that continues up the edge of the pillow to the top left corner. The belt looped over the ankle creates the appearance of a shackle, a metaphor for the pervasive body image issues that cause so many women so much pain.
23.		<i>Seated Red Dress</i> 30 x 40"	Typically I start a painting by roughing in colour over the entire canvas (ask me why!), then go back to fine tune the details. This time, the floor went on perfectly with no need to repaint. The facets in the skirt were another highlight, although not so easily achieved.
24.		<i>Pending</i> 40 x 30"	This was my first painting as Artist in Residence at the Fairmont Empress. Note the sliver of light in the background on the right. It's a reflection of a chair leg, and without it, the painting would lean to the left.

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25.		<i>Determination</i> 40 x 30"	This piece captures the intensity of flamenco. I sometimes ask my students to look for attitude when they're photographing the dancers. <i>Determination</i> is an example of that.
26.		<i>Seated Sunrise</i> 40 x 30"	Some people don't believe I can do faces with a 1½" house painter's brush. <i>Seated Sunrise</i> was completed at the Empress under the watchful eye of a guest who challenged me to finish the face while he watched.
27.		<i>The Cave</i> 40 x 30"	The Cave refers to the enclosed dark space on the right side of the painting. It pushes inward, while the face pushes outward to create dynamic tension.
28.		<i>I Bow to the Goddess Within</i> 30 x 40"	<i>Goddess</i> tricks many casual observers, who think they see a hand on the green leaf pillow on the left. In fact, the only hand visible peeks out from under the pillow in the lower right.
29.		<i>In the Midst</i> 40 x 30"	The pose of this painting, with Amity receding and Gloria coming forward, allows the viewer to feel that they are part of the dance. The astute observer will notice copper stripes on some of the veins of the fan.
30.		<i>Fragments</i> 30 x 40"	Sometimes painting is about knowing when to quit. In <i>Fragments</i> , I'd started refining the green skirt when I realized the rest of the underpainting in its rough form worked perfectly.
31.		<i>Red on Blue</i> 30 x 40"	The strength of this piece is the angle of the pose. The dancer sat on the floor, leaning left, and the camera was almost directly above her. The high contrast of the upper right morphs into midtones below.
32.		<i>Black and Red</i> 36 x 48"	The dancers' skirts are solid black shapes, with no modelling whatsoever. This negative space creates a fascinating coastline effect as it butts up against the light background and the mottled floor.
33.		<i>Over the Shoulder</i> 30 x 40"	This quiet moment provides a contrast to the fire and passion of flamenco. The waterfall of hair, the expanse of shoulder, and the mysterious background objects – unrelated to the dance, but essential to the composition – made the piece.

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34.		<i>Introspection</i> (gold leaf) 24 x 30"	I applied the gold leaf to this painting in a dauby technique to provide a lacy texture. It's more typically put on in a flat sheet, although Gustaf Klimt appears to have daubed, as well as applied it more traditionally, and then painted in to achieve his ornate patterns.
35.		<i>In Motion</i> 30 x 40"	I'm currently working on a second version of this painting, as a result of needing it in two stages to demonstrate at Painters at Painter's last year. The poses are identical, but each painting will be unique.
36.		<i>Open to the Light</i> 40 x 30"	Polka dots are fascinating to paint. The form of the dress is visually created completely by the shape of the white circles, on a flat black surface, indicating folds. I used the bubbles in the wash to create a unique background texture on the left.
37.		<i>A Step Back</i> 30 x 40"	The final step in this painting was to break my own rule of painting what you see. Something was missing from the upper part of the canvas, and the figure needed accentuating. I created a halo effect by using a light wash to outline the head and shoulders.
38.		<i>Arch</i> 30 x 40"	To create the dancer's form, I painted every stripe in her top, exactly as it existed, using flat colour with no modelling. By contrast, the simple background flows from blues to reds through subtle colour shifts, with no solid forms.
39.		<i>Bridging the Divide</i> 40 x 30"	The background in <i>Bridging the Divide</i> was the tricky part, and what you see is its fourth iteration. They included a loose pattern, followed by copper leaf, which I painted over. If you want to see the inspiration for its final form, look at the fireplace surround, with its leaf pattern, which I applied in permanent ink to both places.

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