

Painting to preserve

by Shari Faye Dell (*West Marin Citizen* May 19, 2011)



Spring Beauty, 10" x 24", oil on linen by Zenaida Mott - Ponzzi Ranch Easement

“We want to preserve the lands we love for future generations. That includes the open space and farmland of Marin County. We hope through exhibits and sales of paintings to focus attention on and raise awareness, as well as, funding for those lands and the organizations committed to their preservation,” says Marin artist Zee Zee Mott, founding member of the Bay Wood Artists.

The palette of West Marin

“There is a whole range of color in the landscape,” says Mott, “a very cool group of colors happen in the spring and summer. Then from summer on, the golds and the reds of fall take over. The atmosphere contributes to a tonalist quality with one dominant color or one dominant set of colors becoming more or less contiguous.”

“Much of painting West Marin has to do with the atmosphere,” Mott explains. “Near the coast an ocean mist will soften the colors—making them more harmonious. On other days, it is clear and crisp and things just stand out. The values contrast much more on a clear day. That impacts how you use color and how you set up your composition. Sometimes you want to have your dark and light—your values—say one thing, while on another day, you may want them to say something else.”

Developing story

At an early age, Mott developed a life-long passion for the Northern California landscape, from rugged mountainous transition to roving, rolling hill. Growing up in Berkeley, the daughter of avid nature enthusiasts, she and her family frequently hiked around West Marin and made regular vacations of backpacking the High Sierra. The love for nature carried her on many adventures and plein air expeditions in Europe, Mexico, Africa and Bhutan.

Having studied under many well-known painters, including Maria Sanchez and Elizabeth Holland, Mott employs a compendium of techniques and processes. Seldom working with as many as six colors, Mott says she usually works with “a warm and cool red, a blue, a warm and a cool yellow, and of course, white.” She goes on to explain, “Color Harmony is one of the things I was taught early on. Color harmony and how to mix a couple of colors to achieve any shade of brown or blue. Every color can be made from four of five basic colors.”

Finding it hard to have a favorite season for paint, Mott describes timing is everything, “I prefer to paint in the late afternoon when the shadows are soft and the light plays on the landscape, that gorgeous light. A scene at midday can appear kind of flat, because the shadows are not there and the colors get washed out. Mornings and late afternoons are more evocative of mood, that is what I like to paint.”

A number of Zenaida “Zee Zee” Mott’s paintings of wildlife and landscape appear in her online gallery at < <http://www.zenaidamott.com>

