

DIAMOND BRIGHT

Ellen Diamond's **A Summer in Tuscany** Yields a Crop of Glowing Images

By Valerie Carruthers

Ellen Diamond answers the door of her spacious home in Sawgrass wearing an expression of pure ebullience. She's just learned that a private collector based in Turkey has commissioned her to paint eleven landscapes. He became entranced by her colorful scenes of Provence and Tuscany upon seeing them reproduced on her website (www.ellendiamond.com), then contacted Fairfax Gallery, which has represented her for the past six years. Fairfax called Diamond and the project was on.



Provence Landscape

Other collectors have fallen for her paintings in an equally big way. A midwestern couple, owners of about ten of her works which are displayed at their Cincinnati home and their Ponte Vedra Beach apartment, commissioned her to paint a landscape for their new home in Colorado. Diamond depicted the Colorado River surrounded by snowcapped mountains.

It's typical that things are happening for Diamond with this sort of sweep. In the nine years that she and her husband, Jay Diamond, a writer and former professor, have lived in northeast Florida, she's become one of the area's most sought after artists.

She credits Jack Slaughter, who owns Fairfax Gallery, with steadily helping expand the audience for her work by publishing and distributing giclée prints of her paintings throughout the U.S. Adding the power of the Internet as a marketing tool has served to thrust her signature style of "contemporary impressionism" into the international arena.

Diamond's art possesses an allure that's irresistible. Her images capture the special light, color and sweeping vistas of the

continued



Towers of Tuscany

Mediterranean that have been her consuming passion for more than a decade. In her landscapes of Provence, where she has spent much of every summer, you can almost detect the scent of lavender growing on the hillsides or the aroma of freshly baked croissants wafting from a village patisserie. Similarly, her series depicting the cherished old bridges of Northeast Florida (see Arbus, March/April 2000) suspend the viewer in an era where time is a non-event.

Such visual richness could become saccharine in less sophisticated hands, but Diamond's commanding perspectives and expressionist brushmarks, packed with color, keep the energy charged and perpetually engaging.

Last summer, Diamond and her husband changed itineraries and spent a month immersed in the splendors of Tuscany, whose rolling hills, fields and purity of light have seduced artists for centuries.



Wheat Fields Near Siena

continued

“Traveling through the many famous Tuscan hillsides in Siena, Chianti, San Gimignano, Montalcino and Pienza, along with some of the tiniest villages, made each day a new experience,” says Diamond. “The panoramas of the Siena hills grew more intriguing every time I ventured into them.” She describes their impact upon her landscape art as “fantastic inspiration.”

Diamond shot hundreds of images and painted numerous studies on canvas. Though she loves working outdoors, it’s mainly to jot down her initial impressions. Far from being a plein air painter, Diamond prefers bringing the paintings to completion in her studio at home. There she can expand the studies into importantly scaled paintings, 40 by 60 inches in size. “I must have them around me and develop them and think about them,” she explains of her working method. What Diamond describes is a highly personal process of synthesizing and refining her impressions—photographs, studies, mental images—until they coalesce into a seamless composition. Depicting a scene accurately can only bring Diamond to a point that eventually gives way to painterly expression. In a Diamond landscape nothing is static. Like nature itself, everything flows, the earth breathes.

The Tuscan light and atmosphere led Diamond to explore color differently, departing from a predominantly blue and purple palette. Instead, she emphasizes golds, reds and oranges that allow a “glow” to emerge, she notes. At times, decorative patterning and vivid brushwork “took over.” The results of her sojourn, called *A Summer in Tuscany*, can be seen in her upcoming one-person show at Fairfax Gallery in Ponte Vedra Beach, which opens on Dec. 3 for a two week run. Diamond plans to exhibit between 20 and 25 original works on canvas. Next year, Diamond and her husband will be returning to France. Meanwhile other explorations await the artist.

On a coffee table in the front room of her home is a bronze maquette of a long-legged female figure, the first product of a new pursuit: “Recently I’ve had the urge to sculpt,” Diamond says.

Then there’s the vein opened by that Colorado commission. She is growing fascinated with the idea of painting more scenes of the American landscape.

In a career that spans more than three decades, Ellen Diamond continues to flow with the nature of her creative gifts. Many are the facets of this Diamond and they continue to shine ever more brilliantly.



A View Of Florence