

PAINTED FROM NATURE



PAMELA CARROLL

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As a realist painter, Pamela Carroll works to portray truth. With rare perception and meticulous brushwork her still lifes present nature's offerings—a handful of onions, a bowl of lemons, a cluster of grapes, a collection of polished shells. Her portraits are arresting—intriguing faces full of character and depth. Yet, in an apparent contradiction Carroll also conjures illusion. She strives for that jolt of intuitive response: that moment when the viewer wants to reach out and touch an object on the canvas.

Artists have known for millennia that the illusion of three-dimensional space on a two-dimensional surface provides entry into a world of infinite possibility. In her recent body of work Carroll continues to refine her abilities towards furthering the force of her impact. With almost supernatural clarity she unveils the essential qualities of nature so that for a moment truth and illusion become one.

Once Carroll has selected her subjects, she may spend several days or more constructing a still life arrangement. In *Bowl of Meyer Lemons* (2014), the sharp yellow-greens mix with the overripe yellow-oranges in a mound of sparkling fruit. Each lemon, branch, and leaf is distinctive. The dry, yellowing leaves curl and drop, yet a few blossoms remain to round out the lemon's lifecycle. Working as a colorful foil to the fruit, the large blue and white ceramic bowl gleams with the patina of age. Every nuance is revealed, from small chips on the rim—raw terracotta beneath—to surface nicks, bubbles, and subtle color variations in the glaze. The cloth, though ostensibly white, is filled with reflected color and light, its folds and creases suggesting the table beneath.

Evidence of Carroll's enthusiasm for tackling surface and texture is apparent in her choice of subjects. *Onions* (2014) depicts three varieties, showing their characteristic color and shape, waxy sheen, thread-like roots, and papery layers, set against the wrinkled paper of a starkly realized brown bag—a subtle visual pun. Her rendering of dry, brittle husks and sticky fuzz of cotton bolls in *Cotton Branch* (2014), the powdery film and burnish on each fruit in *Flame Red Grapes* (2014), and the hard pearly surface and distinctive coloration of familiar species in *Shell Collection* (2014) confirm the remarkable facility and veracity of her observational power.

When drawn by an intriguing or distinctive face, Carroll turns to portraiture. In her stunning work *Manal* (2015), a beautiful young woman, rendered in a limited tonal palette of muted browns, greens and black, aims her searching gaze in our direction. Spare but essential areas of white accentuate her hypnotic eyes and dewy complexion; her slim shoulder straps become a unifying compositional element. With richness and depth, this powerful work captures the subject's physical characteristics, while suffusing it with the ineffable complexities of a young woman in the midst of self-discovery.

Pamela Carroll's life is centered in her creative work. A self-taught artist, her paintings have been juried into national, international, and invitational exhibitions and she has garnered numerous awards. Carroll has illustrated seven children's books, and her working techniques have been featured in several publications, including the French periodical *Pratique des Arts*. Her solo exhibitions include the Monterey Museum of Art, Monterey, and the historic Carmel Art Association in Carmel, where she is a long-term member. The Bakersfield Museum of Art commissioned a *trompe l'oeil* work for their collection. In 2006, Carroll was chosen as the White House Artist of the Year and commissioned to create a series of paintings used to illustrate the First Family's annual Christmas brochure.

Helaine Glick, Curatorial Advisor



**Cotton Branch**, 2014, Oil on Panel, 6 x 8 inches



**Pumpkin Head**, 2014, Oil on Panel, 24 x 12 inches



**Flame Red Grapes**, 2014, Oil on Panel, 8 x 6 inches



**Hachiya Persimmon**, 2015, Oil on Panel, 10 x 8 inches



**Onions**, 2014, Oil on Panel, 18 x 24 inches



**Conch Shell**, 2014, Oil on Panel, 10 x 8 inches



**Shell Collection**, 2014, Oil on Panel, 12 x 24 inches



**Duck Egg Nest**, 2014, Oil on Panel, 11 x 14 inches

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Front Cover: **Bowl of Meyer Lemons**, 2014, Oil on Panel, 24 x 36 inches  
Back Cover: **Manal**, 2015, Oil on Panel, 13.5 x 12 inches

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