

NATURAL CREATIONS

This August, Tree's Place will exhibit new works painted from life by Sarah Lamb and Joseph McGurl. **BY ROCHELLE BELSITO**



1

The artwork of Sarah Lamb and Joseph McGurl displays not only their deep connection to the subjects they paint, but also their inspirations from nature. Working without photographic references, Lamb and McGurl paint their respective subject matter in a way that respects and honors the inherent beauty before them.

August 2 to 14, the artists will join together for the first time in a two-artist

exhibition at Orleans, Massachusetts-based Tree's Place. Titled *Italian Inspirations: An Evening of Wine and Art with a Tuscan Terror*, the show will “examine the fascinating ways that both wine and art can be traced to their sources through sensory observations.” Lamb will exhibit small to midsize still lifes, while McGurl will present plein air landscapes from recent travels in Tuscany.

Much of Lamb’s work is inspired by food, flowers and game birds. This will be reflected in the show in pieces such as *Pears and Tissue*, *Cheese*, *Peonies*, and *Serrano Ham and Olives*. The works also contain the dramatic lighting effect of *chiaroscuro*, which often has a strong central focus that is emerging out from the darkness.

In Lamb’s studio there is a natural north light, but sometimes she will work with artificial light to create more drama in her still life setups. For example, in the painting *Cheese* the artificial light allowed for the transparency along the edge of the cheese wedge.

“I try to stay true to what the object really looks like in the light that I am painting it in,” says Lamb. “I never took illustration classes, so I have to have objects exactly how I want them to look in the painting. Half the battle is getting it set up and having the composition; painting is just the execution.”

Every once in a while, after a painting is finished, Lamb will realize there may need to be an additional element in her painting. For instance, in a floral work, she might want the eye to be led to the foreground so she will add a bud or dropped leaves and petals onto a tabletop.

Lamb often paints her still lifes over a short period of time because of the nature of the fleeting subject matter and her preference to work without photography. She also looks to capture the beauty of the subject before it is gone. “I don’t think still life can be captured in photos. Unless you want the painting to look like a photograph, which is a different effect



2



3



1
Still life artist
Sarah Lamb in
her studio.

2
Joseph McGurl
paints on
location in
Tuscany.

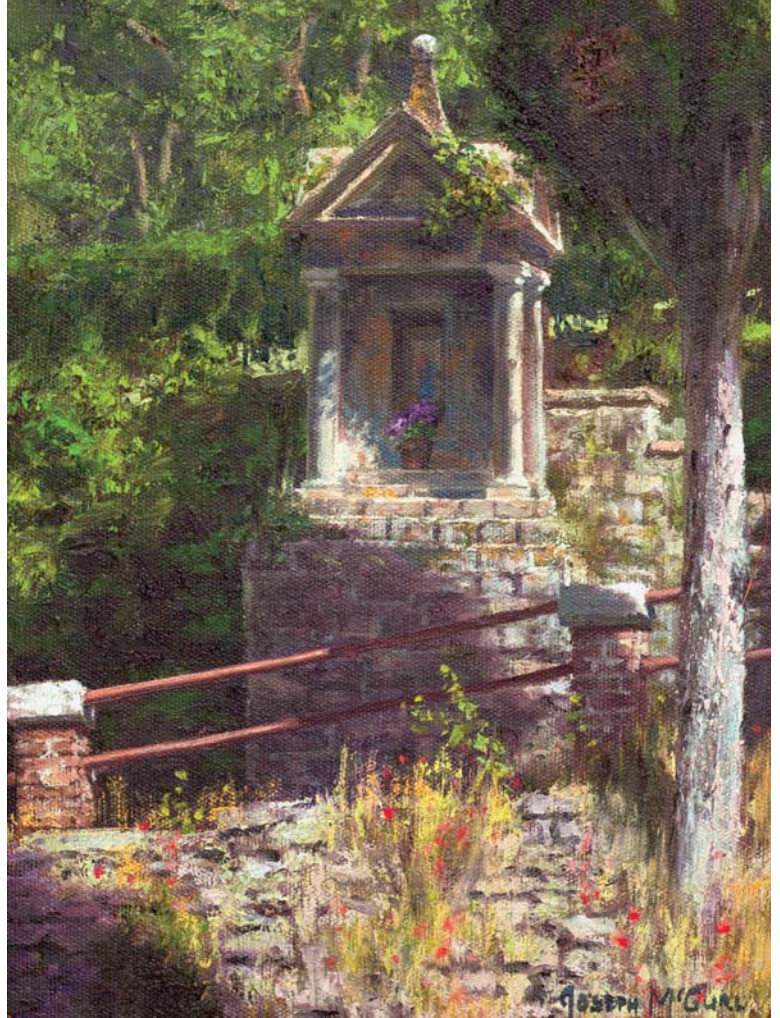
3
**Joseph
McGurl**, *Study
of Near and Far*,
oil on mounted
canvas, 9 x 12"

4
Sarah Lamb,
Cheese, oil,
16 x 25"

4



5



6



7



8

than what I do," says Lamb.

During his recent trip to Tuscany, Italy, McGurl concentrated on making his plein air landscape paintings function as finished pieces. The works, which will be done in two sizes—9 by 12 inches and 6 by 8 inches—all feature places near where McGurl was staying.

"Most of the paintings I did are more nondescript locations. You wouldn't really recognize them but you know they are Italy because they have the architecture and topography," says McGurl, who usually paints locations that have some significance to him or a feature that he responds to.

With these new works, McGurl was focused on the intersection of mountains with vineyards with architecture that is common in Tuscany. He also focused on the atmosphere. "All of those elements come together in Tuscany in particular," says McGurl. "I respond to it on a really deep level. This time I really focused on the atmospheric haze and also the surrounding farmlands and topography of the Tuscan hills."

One of the most important aspects of McGurl's work

is removing himself from the equation and allowing the natural world to speak for itself and answer questions on what this world is about and its meaning.

"I always try to maintain the high fidelity of nature," says McGurl. "So I don't put my own stamp on it, but oftentimes when I go out once I have the information I need, or just explore a visual phenomenon, I'll stop painting because there is no use remaining in the location. For this series of paintings I stayed in the field because the light was fairly consistent and I worked on the painting until it was finished; I didn't want to do a lot of reworking in the studio." ●

5

Sarah Lamb, *Peonies*, oil, 17½ x 16"

6

Joseph McGurl, *Study of a Roadside Shrine*, oil on mounted canvas, 12 x 9"

7

Sarah Lamb, *Serrano Ham and Olives*, oil, 15 x 24"

8

Joseph McGurl, *Study of Stone Pines with Morning Haze*, oil on mounted panel, 9 x 12"

SARAH LAMB AND JOSEPH MCGURL: ITALIAN INSPIRATIONS

When: August 2-14, 2014

Where: Tree's Place, Route 6A at 28, Orleans, MA 02653

Information: (508) 255-1330, www.treesplace.com