

Artist to Collect

Brian Davis





previous spread, *Morning Rose*, oil on canvas, 24" x 24"
above, *Pale Orange Rose*, oil on canvas, 30" x 30"



right top, *Pink Peony*, oil on canvas, 20" x 20"
right bottom, *Pale Pink Dahlia*, oil on canvas, 00" x 00"



The Essence of Beauty

written by Brett Anningson

Imagine if you could see beyond the natural world to the beauty within. For more than two decades, Brian Davis has been creating paintings which belie the simplicity of form found in nature, creating an illusion of depth that captivates the viewer. As he paints a landscape or a flower, he creates something more than the original. "For me," says Brian, "the flower is the stage and the light is the dancer."

Painting from photographs, Brian has an uncanny ability to illuminate his paintings in such a way that his technique focuses the eye on the

patterns of light in each work. Influenced by the Dutch Masters, as well as Art Deco and Art Nouveau creations, Brian captures an intensity of colour through the overlaying of many layers of paint, while at the same time creating highly stylized renditions of the world around him.

His whole life has been about a constant belief in his artistic ability. In the sixth grade he met Robert Anton who would also turn out to be a very gifted artist. As best friends, they often had friendly competitions which helped hone their artistic skills. They remain friends to this day.

"Not to say I haven't had my share of setbacks," Brian says, "but I tend to see them as a normal part of the life journey; as opportunities to grow. I am very bulldog-like and I tend to just keep forging ahead. Tenacity is more important than talent in many situations. If one has both, watch out!"

As he sees it, his artistic goal is to find the most elegant way to express a subject. Thus, he focuses on discovering and bringing to light the





previous spread left, *Three Pink Dahlias*, oil on canvas, 36" x 24"
previous spread right, *Two Blue Irises*, oil on canvas, 36.5" x 24"

left, *Yellow Iris Alight*, oil on canvas, 36" x 18"
above, *Golden Solo Rose*, oil on canvas, 16" x 20"

hidden beauty that is often overlooked in our world. In this way, he hopes to remind people of the magnificence all around us, while at the same time remaining true to the artistic voice within.

Love and War

Born in Burbank, California, Brian grew up in a very loving home, with an older brother, Jeff, and younger sister, Tricia. Both of his parents were professional musicians who supported creativity in their children. When it became obvious that Brian had a gift for drawing and painting, he was encouraged to have fun in all aspects of art making. This idea that the creative process should be fun and inquisitive has stuck with him throughout his life.

Brian attended Pierce Jr. College in Woodland Hills, California, earning an associate degree. This was at the time of the Vietnam War. In 1967,

he was drafted into the Army and honorably discharged in 1969. "Then I returned to college at California State Los Angeles University," Brian recalls, "but left in my senior year because of frustration with the Art Department. The art professors continually criticized me for wanting to make representational art."

Brian emphasizes that he was burdened with professors who seemed to be in love with all non-objective abstract art. A type of art which holds absolutely no interest for him, but which had become de rigueur at the close of the '60s. He learned very little about the craft of painting, even though it was his college major. Instead, he credits his learning to tenacious reading, trial and error, and visiting museums. In essence, his ability and style were self-taught.

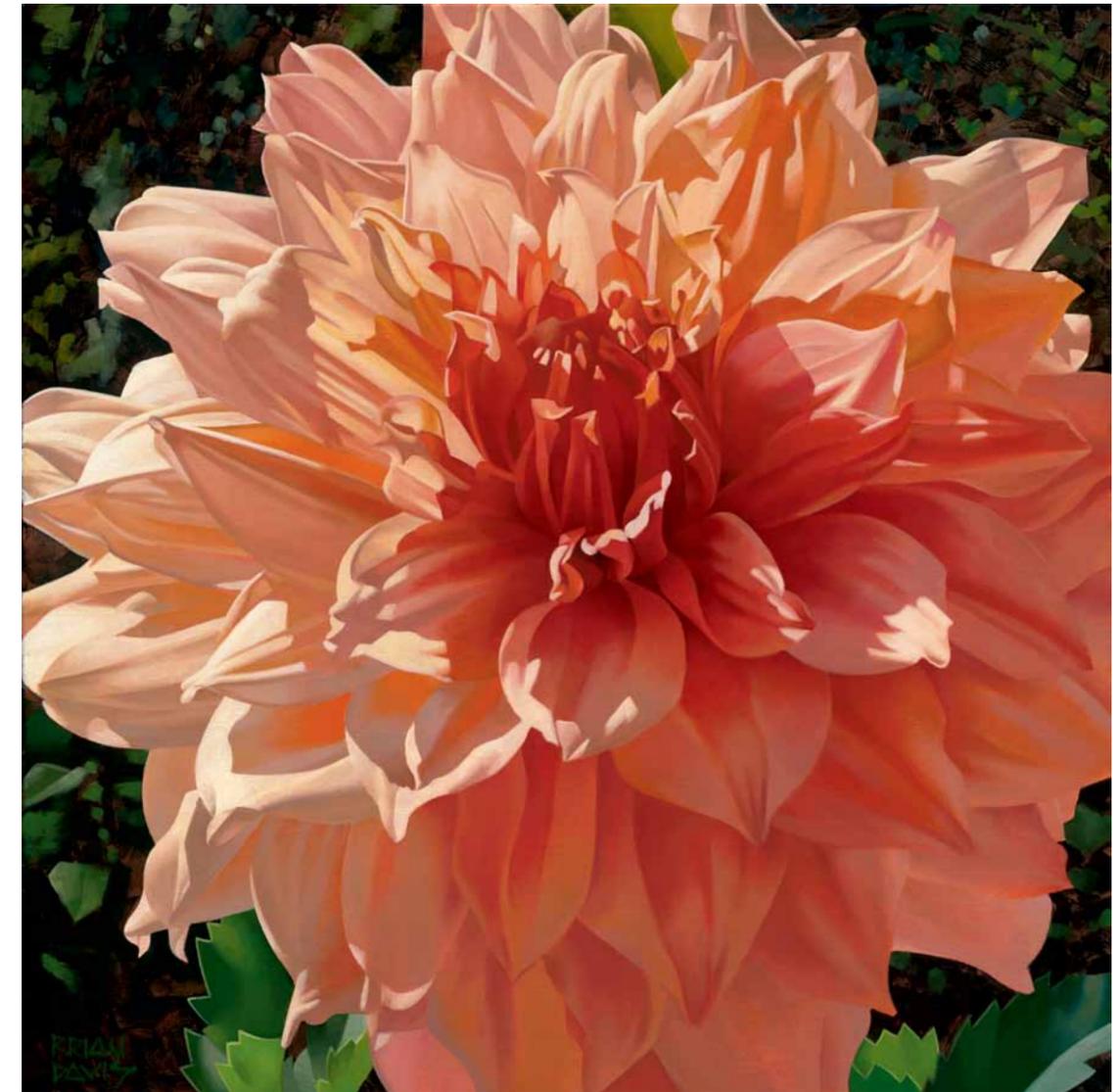
"Now, in my mid-sixties, wanting to give back, I decided to say "yes" to the many requests I have





previous spread, *Delicate Double Delight Rose*, oil on canvas, 16" x 20"

above, *Crimson Glory*, oil on canvas, 32" x 32"



Singing Orange Dahlia, oil on canvas, 40" x 40"

had to teach oil painting workshops," he explains. "I find that most of my students are people with degrees in art, who had the same experience that I did in college. They learned little about the craft of painting. I thought my experience was unique, but it turns out to be very common. I have grown to believe that most, or nearly all, universities across the country promote modern art making and look down upon artists who paint in a representational style. How much does one need to know to teach drip painting? That was suggested to me in college as something that I should do because it was cutting edge, even though Jackson Pollock did it in the '50s."

Life in Transition

Needing some time to refocus, Brian had planned to go back and finish his degree,

but when he began selling his artistic skill as an illustrator, he became so successful that the degree kept receding in importance. Companies looking for an illustrator were far more interested in a portfolio than a degree, and Brian certainly did not feel like returning to the institution as a teacher. So the plan fell by the wayside.

"In 1980, I left the world of illustration behind," he remembers. "I wanted to be a fine artist and, with that in mind, I created a limited edition painting using a series of stencils made out of aluminum. I sprayed acrylic paint through the holes in the stencils with airbrushes. It was a picture of a parrot in a magnolia tree. I could make the limited edition painting over and over because the aluminum stencils were so strong."

This type of stencil painting is officially known

as 'Pochoir'. It was a technique that Brian really enjoyed, culminating in his creating a number of wonderfully expressive works in this way. It also turned out to be hugely successful.

"As a result, I had many museums wanting to give me exhibitions," he says. "I made the posters for those shows, myself, founding Davis-Blue Artwork, Inc. with my partner and friend, Robert Blue."

Davis-Blue Artwork remained in business for 15 years and at its peak in 1984 had a line of 50 posters and limited editions, 11 employees, 13 sales representatives, and sold to 5,000 galleries and poster shops. The company published the work of many other artists, and at their most successful time grossed sales well over one million dollars per year. Along this journey, Brian set up a screen printing department to control

the quality of the Serigraphs being published. In 1985, Davis-Blue Artwork was offered \$5,000,000 to sell the company. That offer was rejected.

"In 1987, the art market experienced a huge downturn and we found ourselves \$250,000 in the red," Brian recalls. "So we sold the copyrights to our posters, paid off our debts and went forward as screen printers, doing many prints for the Walt Disney Corporation."

Brian was happy with this transition because it meant he could cut back to about 20 hours a week to keep the print shop going, and spend all the remaining time on his passion for painting. "The print shop paid the bills," he laughs. "It put me in the position to achieve my ultimate goal, to be a fine artist making oil paintings. That is what I have been doing for the last 25 years."



Beauty Secrets

In 2003, Brian sold his house in Los Angeles and moved to Reno, Nevada with Laurie Roberts, his partner of 25 years. Reno turned out to have glorious weather, fabulous natural beauty and wonderful people. These recent years have materialized into the building of wonderful friendships and the gift of being able to focus on the creation of beauty.

One of the more interesting facets of his work is an ancient technique Brian uses to create a painting medium named 'Flemish Maroger'. It is an all-in-one medium and protective finish discovered by Jacques Maroger, painter and former curator of the Louvre in the early 20th Century. Maroger worked to uncover the secret formulas used by Old Masters such as Titian, Rubens, Van Dyck, Velasquez, and others. Consisting of Black Oil and Mastic Varnish, this medium comes in the form of a soft jelly and is often referred to as liquid glass.

When the painter mixes pigment with this liquid glass, the result is extraordinary. It congeals in the air and then becomes ductile again at the touch of the brush. Drawn by the brushstroke, it moves fluently over the canvas. As soon as the brush is removed, it immediately congeals and becomes firm again.

Brian teaches this technique of painting, mastered over a lifetime, during week long workshops at various times during the year, and using online Skype mentoring. If you truly want to follow in his footsteps, be prepared... as each and every tube of paint he uses is mixed personally to create the correct colour and viscosity. Then again, it is this attention to detail which has served him so well throughout his career.

To view more of the works of Brian Davis visit www.briandavisart.com or contact him at brian@briandavisart.com, 775.750.9824.



previous spread left, *Enchanting Irises*, oil on canvas, 40" x 20"
previous spread right top, *Brilliant Red Solo Rose*, oil on canvas, 18" x 24"
previous spread right bottom, *Visions of Love*, oil on canvas, 24" x 48"
right, *Heavenly*, oil on canvas, 30" x 30"