

# Masters Showcase



## First Place **Leona Shanks**

*The Hero, 2010, oil, 30 x 40"*

Collection of the Artist

### **Journey**

For as long as I can remember, I have always wanted to be an artist. As a teenager, I remember feeling a direct connection with the world's creative past. I had an intuitive sense of what I needed to achieve my own artistic goals and I searched many years. I finally found rest from my search when I found the sculpture atelier of Evangelos Frudakis. He talked to us about the Greeks like they were alive. At age 25, I came under the tutelage of Nelson Shanks who I studied with for 4 years. The more I paint, the more I unearth and understand the truth of nature and apply it to my art. It is a life long journey and commitment.

### **Inspiration**

As an artist, it is important to find a voice. I like to paint iconic images of contemporary issues. As turmoil raged in the Middle East, I had this image in my head for two years of a soldier. I wanted to pay tribute to those whom serve. There is such irony that war is a fight for peace. Going to battle carries a heavy price. "The Hero" is analogous to the soldier who risks or sacrifices life itself by defending his deeply held convictions to secure freedom for others.

### **Process**

I first painted a grisaille that was my basic drawing for the painting and composition for the canvas. This took four hours because I wanted to be both correct but remain loose to keep options open if I changed my mind with the drawing or composition. Then, I started to lay in the shapes of colors as they related to each other until I covered the entire canvas with color. As the painting progressed over time, shapes became more specific. Shapes of color and value create the illusion of form so the process is simply a steady progression to this end.



## Second Place **Ellen Cooper**

*Judy, 2008, oil, 46 x 32"*

Collection of the Artist

### **Journey**

It seems to me that art has always been integral to my life. My mother enjoyed a successful career as a portraitist and was often at work in her studio, causing the house to smell faintly of turpentine and oil paint. As a young person, I made the exciting discovery that I had the ability to draw accurately, and since then I've never considered any other pursuit. I was lucky early on to connect with a fabulous, eccentric and formidable teacher who fostered a passion for art within me and taught me to demand much of myself.

### **Inspiration**

I first saw my subject walking across a crowded room at a music festival in my hometown. Judy carried herself in a way that stood out — she had an uncanny grace about her. I was drawn in by her strong and compelling face, the color in her skin tones, and her unusual hair.

### **Process**

Judy gave me the time to paint a good deal of her from life in exchange for a study in oil. As with most of my paintings, the creative process involves examining all the possibilities in an attempt to relay the essence of what I see in the person. It can be a creative tug-of-war between preconceived notions and ideas that I discover along the way. Judy struck this standing pose with hands gracefully folded in front of her, head slightly cocked, eyes connecting — it aptly conveys that quiet, self-contained peacefulness as well as her strength.