



ALL: The Texture of Still Life

Pucker Gallery, Boston



2. *Stargazer Lilies*, 2001
22¹/₄ x 21¹/₄", **AC227**

Front Cover:

1. *A Special Place*, 2000, 57 x 57", **AC224**

Design: Jennifer Bennett **Editor:** Jeanne Gressler **Photography:** Max Coniglio
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The Texture of Still Life

Ali's paintings have held a fascination for me since the early 1980's when my husband and I first saw her show of silkscreen prints. In those early works I found wonderfully surreal empty spaces with a few distant figures silently enacting their unexplained roles. Their loneliness and isolation were evident and alluring. I was drawn into these vast landscapes and felt very, very small. Since my first encounter with her work, and with the evolution of her existential spaces, I have been continually invited into an extraordinary world.

Even the interior spaces seemed large and barren, as if they were stages waiting for the play to begin. These interiors always had an opening to those empty landscapes through windows, tent flaps, or doorways - an escape route. The irresistible interior light drew me inside. Banners and flags tried to charge the atmosphere with gaiety and anticipation, yet, at the same time, it was hushed and somber.

Then and now, the wonderful paintings by Ali know no clock; they are suspended in time. Her use of the high horizon line creates enormous depth and space, a landscape that goes forever. Tall vertical poles and banners further establish the vast space and increase the detachment of the figures from each other. The artist is also a master of light, shadow, and color through the judicious use of the layering of sheer fabrics onto her canvas.

Today, her paintings still contain many of these elements. They have evolved through several phases into still life tableaus expressing mystery, loss and the unknown. They have become spiritual places, repositories of the artist's memories. Artifacts of life in Oaxaca, Mexico appear on tables in one series of works, first to celebrate not only the "Day of the Dead", but also everyday life and memories. The use of gaily printed fabrics on the surfaces shows the joy with which spiritual concerns are addressed in Mexican homes. Families go to great lengths to confer beauty and dignity on the memory of past loved ones and show their continual connection to them.

While the "Day of the Dead" works have a dramatic flair, in many of her still lifes it is the mystery of the ordinary that allows a special perspective into our own lives. In *Rose Tablecloth* (AC217) a small table with objects sitting on a brightly flowered cloth

becomes more than it seems in its bare outdoor setting. Ali shows how the ordinary details of our lives can reveal inner emotions and the larger issues of our world. In one recent painting, *Time Remembered* (AC209), I am drawn to a deep landscape. There is a table in the foreground covered with a decorative cloth. On the table are personal photographs and white flowers. Two people are standing in the distance, looking outward, waiting for someone or something. The memories it speaks of are palpable and even if they are not our own, they encourage us to see and remember our own lives. It is a haunting moment that is repeated over and over in Ali's work. In another, *The Dress* (AC219), the child's white dress, sprinkled with shadows flitting over the surfaces, hangs on the door which is open to the vast, empty landscape. What child wears the dress? What is her story? Ali's use of the masks in *After Carnival* (AC223) exhibits the theatricality of our lives as we struggle to play out our roles with one another. The masks seem forlorn and discarded, keeping their secrets and mysteries to themselves. It is images such as these that make me want to spend time with Ali's paintings; to wander through these mysterious and haunting spaces.

There is no clutter in Ali's works; they are spare in landscape details and rich in foreground details. Whether the tableaus are of mementos and treasures, pitchers of flowers past their prime, or ripening and tantalizing luscious fruits and vegetables, they show fragments of everyday domestic life that give me a strong connection to the paintings.

And they are paintings. As an artist, I am fascinated by process. I want to know how things work, peel apart the layers to find the beginning. When Ali creates shadows out of thin films of gauze, snipped and stitched, I think I have found Peter Pan's shadow. The quick stitches that create a person in the distance, are, upon examination, nothing more than tiny bits of thread in an abstract pattern. I find myself looking closely at the huge skies glowing in the evening dusk, trying to find the beginnings of the incredible color transitions, the edges of the layers of color. They remain elusive, their details endlessly captivating.

Ali's paintings are sheer magic to me, both from the standpoint of composition and fabrication, as well as the lessons learned in the richness of the tablescapes in the otherworldly and empty terrain.

— Chris Rifkin



3. *Heart and Flowers*, 1999, 31 x 30 1/8", AC215



4. *Half Full*, 2000, 20 x 19¹/₂" , **AC220**



5. *Mexican Pitcher*, 2000,
10¹/₂ x 10¹/₂" , **AC221**



6. *Rose Tablecloth*, 2000, 18¹/₄ x 18¹/₄" , **AC217**



7. Amor, 1998, 38 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 31 $\frac{1}{2}$ " , AC212



8. *Changing Patterns*, 1998, 24 x 21 $\frac{1}{2}$ " , **AC210**



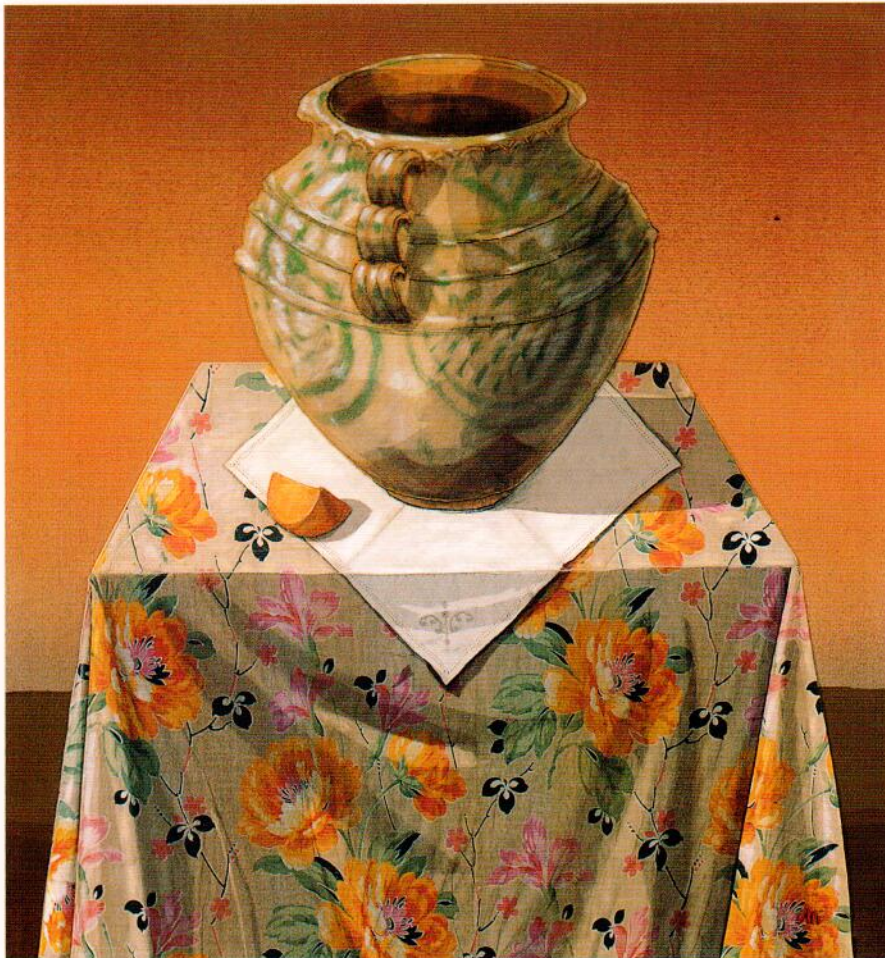
9. *Almost Twelve*, 2000, 28 x 24 $\frac{1}{2}$ " , **AC222**



10. *Time Remembered*, 1998, 42 x 38", **AC209**



11. *White Tablecloth*, 2000, 21³/₄ x 17¹/₂" , **AC218**



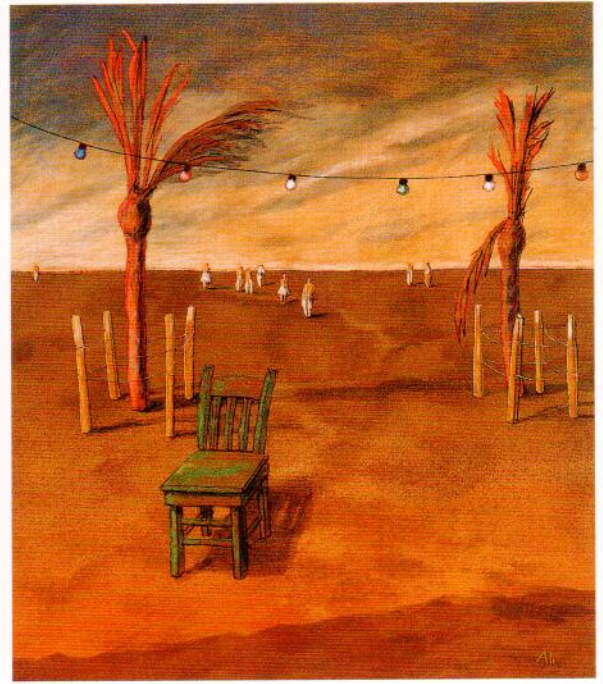
12. *Homage*, 1998, 32 x 30" , **AC211**



13. *After Carnival*, 2000, 33 x 36 1/4", **AC223**



14. *Stargazer Lilies II*, 2001, 27³/₄ x 26³/₄" , **AC229**



15. *Chair*, 1999, 26¹/₄ x 23" , **AC214**



16. *Mask III*, 2001, 31 x 25¹/₂" , **AC228**



17. *Mask*, 1999, 33 x 28", **AC213**



18. *Mask II*, 2001, 18³/₄ x 18³/₄", **AC226**



19. *Dos Mesas Grandes*, 1998, 42 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 62 $\frac{1}{2}$ " , **AC207**



20. *The Dress*, 1999, 48 x 40", **AC219**

Back Cover:

22. *Elaine's Garden*, 2001, 18³/₄ x 18³/₄", **AC225**

ALI (Alison Cann-Cliff)

- 1979 Artists Foundation Fellowship
1967-1972 School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
1968-1971 Tufts University (B.F.A.)

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2001 *The Texture of Still Life*, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA
1998 *Monuments*, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA
1998 *Day of the Dead II*, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA
1995 *Nature Morte - Naturaleza Muerta*, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA
1993 *Ofrendas: Offerings*, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA
1991 *Ali: Performance Spaces*, Pucker Safrai Gallery, Boston, MA
President's Choice Exhibition, South Shore Artists' Association, Cohasset, MA
1988 *Ali: Circus, Sand and Sea*, Pucker Safrai Gallery, Boston, MA
1986 *Ali's Circus Revisited*, Pucker Safrai Gallery, Boston, MA
1984 *Ali Monotypes*, Pucker Safrai Gallery, Boston, MA
1982 Traveling exhibition, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA
1981 *Views and Viewpoints, Landscapes of the 20th Century*, Pucker Safrai Gallery, Boston, MA
1980 Pucker Safrai Gallery, Boston, MA
1978 *Ali's Circus*, Pucker Safrai Gallery, Boston, MA
1977 *Beyond the Center Ring*, Pucker Safrai Gallery, Boston, MA

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2001 *Dream Worlds: Neo-Surrealism in the Millennium*, Attleboro Museum of Art, Attleboro, MA
2000 *Fine Choices, Memories Now*, Pucker Gallery, Boston, MA
1991 *The Mind's Eye*, The Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA
1985 Boston Arts Festival Invitational, Boston, MA
1984 Miami International Print Biennial, Coral Gables, FL
1981-82 *Center Ring: The Artist (Two Centuries of Circus Art)*, Traveling Exhibition:
Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI
Ohio Art Museum, Columbus, OH
New York State Museum, Albany, NY
Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.
1981 25th Annual Print Exhibition, Hunterdon Art Center, Clinton, NJ
12th National Art Exhibit, Second Crossing Gallery, Valley City, ND
1981 Audubon Artists 39th Annual Exhibition, National Arts Club, New York, NY

- 1979 *Art of the State*, Rose Art Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA
Provincetown Art Association, Provincetown, MA
1977 *Six Artists*, Pucker Safrai Gallery, Boston, MA
Centennial Exhibition, Museum School, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

COLLECTIONS

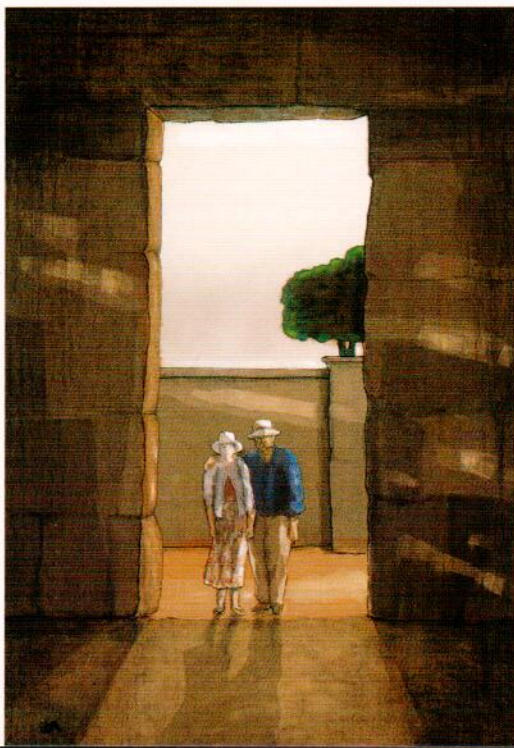
- Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia, Canada
Boston Public Library, Boston, MA
Currier Gallery of Art, Manchester, NH
Davis Art Museum, Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA
DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln, MA
Fitchburg Art Museum, Fitchburg, MA
Fogg Museum, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA
Johnson Art Gallery, Middlebury College, VT
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA
Neka Museum, Ubud, Bali, Indonesia
New Britain Museum of American Art, New Britain, CT
Rose Museum, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA
Schick Gallery, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY
Tel Aviv Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel
The Art Gallery, Vassar College, Poughkeepsie, NY
William Rockhill Nelson Museum, Kansas City, MO
Worcester Art Museum, Worcester, MA

MONOGRAPHS

Beyond the Big Top: The Cloth Paintings and Graphic Works
David R. Godine, Publisher and Pucker Safrai Gallery, Boston, 1988

Paintings of the Last Decade: Still Life
Pucker Art Publications, Boston, MA, 2001

21. *On the Threshold*, 2000, 21 x 15", AC216



ALL: The Texture of Still Life

Pucker Gallery, Boston

1 December 2001 thru 8 January 2002

Opening Reception:

1 December, 2001 — 3 to 6 pm

The Public is invited to attend

The Artist will be present



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ADDRESS SERVICES REQUESTED.

Gallery Hours:
Monday through Saturday 10:00 am to 5:30 pm
Sundays 1:00 to 5:00 pm

Member of the Boston Art Dealers Association. One hour free validated parking is available on the corner of Newbury and Dartmouth Streets