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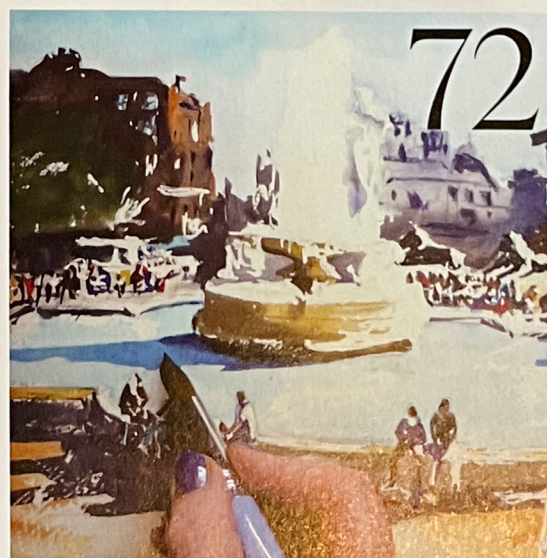
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Anna Rose Bain

Based in Denver, Colorado, **ANNA ROSE BAIN** works full-time as a fine art oil painter and commissioned portrait artist who especially loves painting women and children. *Niki Browes* finds out more

When she was a young art student, Anna Rose Bain learned many of the painting and drawing basics: how to draw, how to look at a subject in terms of line, light and shadow shapes, and simple concepts about design, colour and value. But what she didn't realise was that she was also being imbued with a specific worldview, one that was being blueprinted into her psyche and art. Since then, she's learnt that much of what she was taught did align with her core values – but some didn't. As a professional artist, she is now slowly “un-training” herself from some of the classical dogma she was taught back then, trying to embrace a wider variety of artistic styles and philosophies, and applying what she feels fits her as an artist and human.

Unusually, she doesn't have a go-to subject to paint and embraces pretty much every topic going, including figures, portraits, self-portraits, children, pets and landscapes. She paints the things that interest her but, more specifically, keeps coming back to painting what she knows: the world around her, the people she loves, other mums and the beautiful flowers in her garden. She views her work as a visual diary and says that “since a person's entire life is seldom limited to one singular interest, an artist shouldn't be limited to one subject either.”

For the 16th ARC Salon Competition in 2022, she won the *Artists & Illustrators Award* for her painting *Taking Flight* (opposite) artworkbyannarose.com ▶



Taking Flight,
oil on linen,
76x51cm



Her First Time at the Beach, oil on copper, 20x25cm

I'd describe my work as realist with a touch of Impressionism.

I'm always riding the line between loose, alla prima techniques and a tighter, more classical approach. This kind of duality has always been present in my life and work. In high school and college, my go-to medium was always pencil or coloured pencils, but when I began working with oils in college, I fell in love and haven't looked back. Oils offer endless possibilities. You can create such a marvellous feeling of depth and atmosphere, or you can build them up texturally to make a work of art that is almost sculptural. I also love how forgiving they are; some of my best paintings are those that have been painted over the top of failed or abandoned ones.

As a mum to two young kids, one of whom is on the autism spectrum, there is no such thing as a typical day.

It can be frustrating at times, but I also love

that my work allows me flexibility, as well as some control, over what I choose to take on. I'm very grateful to be at a point in my career where I can turn down work if I don't feel it's going to bring me joy. I'm also grateful for the chance to do some work for free once in a while if I feel it's a worthy cause. Not all artists have that luxury: we have bills to pay, too!

What matters is the work I'm producing, not necessarily the space I'm producing it in.

My current studio is a corner of our 2,500-square-foot, unfinished walk-out basement. It has lots of natural light from the north and the east, cement flooring and nine-foot ceilings. While it's not always ideal – the kids can barge in and interrupt whenever they want – it's a good start to what will eventually be a finished, closed-off space. It doesn't matter if my space is perfect; if I really want to paint, I'm going to find a way.

If I really had to choose a favourite subject to paint, I would say it's motherhood.

I've got so much joy out of painting breastfeeding mothers, pregnant mums and women with their babies and children. That could change of course, as I branch out and enter a different stage of life. But so far it has kept me busy for at least the last 10 years.

Along with painting, I also hold a few workshops throughout the year and travel all over the US.

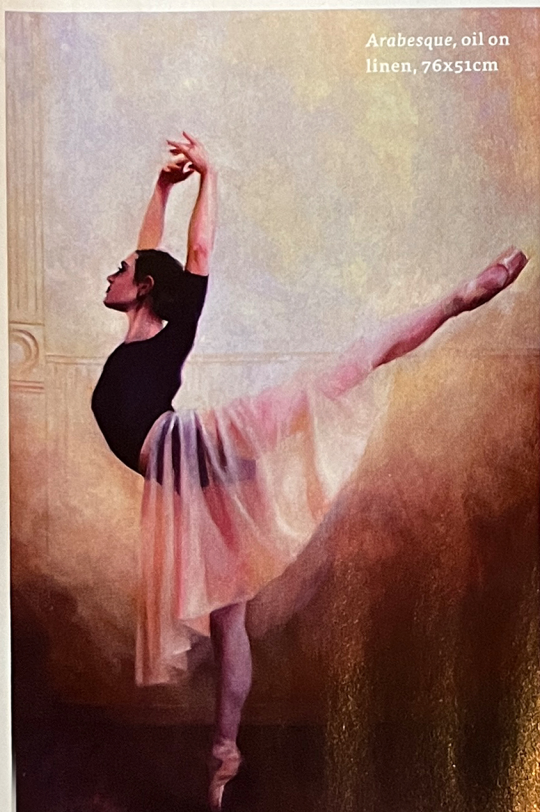
There are usually around 12-16 students and they're spread over three days, although this month I am leading a 10-day masterclass in South Africa; that will be for a smaller, more exclusive group. Usually, I teach portrait painting and we work with live models; I do a demonstration in the morning, and the students work in the afternoon from the model, while I go from person to person and instruct. Recently, I've branched out to



*Lilacs and
Peonies, oil on
linen, 51x25cm*



*Last of the Lilacs,
oil on linen,
41x31cm*



*Arabesque, oil on
linen, 76x51cm*

teaching figure painting and painting children from photos. That was a big hit with students who want to learn how to paint their kids and grandkids.

I try to help students channel their fear they might have and turn it into excitement.

Some tend to hold back because they are afraid to mess up, but I tell them painting is just play! There are certainly some brush strokes, colours and compositions that work better than others, but we learn from each decision we make in a painting, and we learn how to become better problem solvers. All of us have insecurities about our art; it's only natural. But how we choose to address those insecurities is critical. We can hide behind making "safe" paintings and choosing not to challenge ourselves, or we can decide to tackle our weaknesses by taking on something that is going to make us a little bit uncomfortable.

Have I learnt from my own mistakes?

You bet! Whether it be from charging too little for a time-consuming portrait commission, or from entering too many shows at the same time and running into overlap with the same piece being accepted into two different exhibitions, which is embarrassing. I also think it's important to look for ways you can grow from each new work of art, even if it's something you've painted a hundred times before, like a simple head study. For example, I've learned that I tend to make noses too long when I block in my initial shapes. So, I try to compensate for that by making the nose a bit shorter than I think I should, and it usually ends up being just right.

I only take on four to five commissions a year, but I'm usually working on at least one or two at a time.

I like to work on them in conjunction with personal or gallery work to stay fresh and ►



Tender Bond,
oil on linen,
76x51cm



King of the Wild Things, oil on linen, 76x76cm



The Moon and the Muse, oil on panel, 91x61cm



Child of Spring, oil on panel, 61x30cm

excited about each project. The larger commissioned work can take up to six months, maybe more depending on how busy I am with my other full-time job (that being motherhood). Smaller commissioned portraits of single subjects can be finished in just a couple of weeks or even one or two sittings. It just depends; every painting is different and requires an individualised approach.

It has taken me quite a few years, but I think I finally have a healthy relationship with competitions.

In my 20s and early 30s, I connected too much of my identity and self-worth with whether or not I was accepted into a show. Comparison with others can be pretty toxic; however, I do feel that painting for specific shows and exhibitions is a good thing if they are going to motivate us to strive for excellence and elevate our work to a greater level, be a good fit for our aesthetic style and collector base and help us reach a new audience or boost our credibility with our current audience.

There have been so many challenges along the way.

But the good news is, they don't usually all happen at the same time. Early on it was challenging to make work that was consistently good; I was still just learning how to paint and trying to develop my

technique. Later it became a question of, how do I reach a larger audience? I tried all kinds of things, from participating in art festivals and entering every online Call to Artists, to networking at conferences and events, and jumping on the social media train very early on. Another colossal challenge was finding time and energy to paint after having kids.

Success is making a painting that satisfies me.

That is, where every square inch of it is pleasing to look at, and nothing bothers me anymore. In broader terms, success is finding a healthy balance between pursuing and achieving my goals and being at peace with myself and others. It means finding a way to make art that is creative, satisfying, and a positive contribution to society.

You only get one life.

Yours is a story worth telling. If you feel called to share it through the visual arts, there's no time like the present. Start by joining a local figure drawing group, or setting up weekly still lifes to practice working from life. Take the time to learn the language, so you can more effectively tell your story. Take small steps: they will eventually evolve into larger leaps. You can do it. Ultimately, if you feel that art is your calling, then you absolutely should. □