



RedDot Reader Profile | Holly Van Hart

by [Jason Horejs](#) November 3, 2016

Posted in [Artist Interviews](#), [Reader Profile](#)

6

Oil and acrylic artist Holly Van Hart paints colorful, abstract representations of scenes in nature in her studio in Silicon Valley, California.

I had a great conversation with Holly about her artwork and her career as a full-time artist.

Jason: When did you first become interested in art?



Field of Dreams | oil on canvas 24 x 30 sold

Holly Van Hart: I've always loved art and making things. As a girl I painted and did ceramics, crocheting, and calligraphy. Later, as an adult, I pursued painting passionately as a hobby – taking many classes, reading hundreds of books, forming an art critique group, and painting every spare minute. That led me down the path to where I am today . . . a professional full-time artist.

J: Are there other artists in your family?

years taught painting workshops in New York.

HV: My mom is a painter and for many

J: Did your family encourage your art?

HV: Yes. My mom always let us use her artist-quality supplies, and taught us how to draw and paint. (Thanks, Mom!)

J: Describe your style and subject matter.

HV: I make abstracted nature paintings that are intended to surprise viewers with unusual colors and textures, and ignite new excitement about a particular slice of nature.

J: How did you develop your style?

HV: Thousands and thousands of hours of painting in the studio. I wanted to have a distinctive style, so I took classes from a broad range of teachers. Then I kept painting and experimenting until I found just the right medium, look, and subjects for me.

J: What drew you to your subject matter?

HV: I am absorbed and inspired by the idea of the limitless opportunities we have in our lives, and this theme runs through my work. I express this through my abstracted nature paintings. The paintings are filled with abundance and life, and carry titles such as 'Field of Dreams' and 'Possibilities Abound'.

J: What is your medium?

HV: Oil and acrylic paints

J: What do you feel is unique about your work?

HV: What's unique about my paintings is the combination of representational and abstract elements. One example of this is in "Forest Reverie," where you see realistic aspen tree trunks intermingled with 'leaves' and 'grass' that are created with blocky brushstrokes of color.

I always want to give viewers something interesting to think about. Plus, it's much more exciting when I get to make up the colors and shapes.

J: How do you promote and expose your work to potential buyers?



Forest Reverie | oil on canvas 48 x 36 sold



How Dreams Are Made | oil on canvas 36 x 48 \$4,200

HV: Through galleries, interior designers, social media, and my own list of VIP art-lovers. To keep in touch with my VIPs, I send emails with the latest fresh-off-the-easel paintings, inspirations, and exhibition news (one email every 3 weeks).

Once or twice a year, I hold an Open Studio in my studio and home gallery.

Throughout the year, designers and collectors regularly schedule appointments to see my latest work.

J: What do you feel has been your greatest challenge in selling your work?

HV: Getting the word out. In order for people to be interested in your work, they first have to know about it.

J: What other jobs have you held?

HV: Before becoming a professional artist, I worked full-time in high technology for over 20 years. I have a Masters degree in engineering, and worked as an engineer, and later a sales and operations director. While I was in high-tech, I was very passionate about art and painted every weekend and in the evenings whenever possible.

J: What do you feel you've been most successful at in your art, and in your art business?

HV: I've been very fortunate . . . shortly after leaving my career in high tech, one of my paintings won Grand Prize in the California Statewide Painting Competition. That resulted in a huge boost of publicity and awareness, and in a solo exhibition at the Triton Museum of Art. Another big boost came earlier in 2016, when my work won a Best of Houzz Service Award.

J: How much work do you produce per month on average?

HV: 2 - 4 paintings, depending on the size and subject. Each painting gets about 10 layers of oil paint and takes 4-6 months to complete. Oil paint dries slowly, and it takes about a week for one layer to dry before I can start the next one.

J: Do you have a daily routine?

HV: Believe it or not, I work more hours per week now than I did in high tech.

I have a home studio, and am in the studio painting every day from 7am til 3 or 4pm. Every day. I follow the advice of Chuck Close, a famous artist I admire, who says "Inspiration is for amateurs. The rest of us just show up and get to work. . . . All the best ideas come out of the process; they come out of the work itself."

I buy into that. Through the process of painting every day, I challenge myself to create my very best work. And to keep learning and experimenting.

An artist's job is not done when the art is created. Part of the role is running your own art business, with your website, blog, marketing, galleries, exhibits, etc. I try to dedicate my daytime to painting, and take care of the business stuff in the evenings. This takes many hours, on most days.

J: What are your interests outside of your art?

HV: I love spending time with family and friends over meals, hikes, bike rides, art projects, and friendly poker games.



Summer Sparkle | oil and acrylic on canvas 48 x 36 \$4,200



Your Highest Potential | oil on canvas 30 x 40 \$3,200

J: Who is your favorite artist from art history (and why), and which of their works is your favorite (and why)?

HV: I like all artists who push the envelope in some exciting way.

Some of my favorite artistic influences include J.M.W. Turner's late expressionistic landscapes, Georgia O'Keeffe's magnified images of nature, Mark Rothko's color-fields, and Joan Mitchell's huge abstract expressionist paintings. I'm also a big fan of Walt Whitman, an American poet.

J: Thank you, Holly. To see more of Holly's work, visit <http://hollyvanhart.com>.



Jason Horejs | Owner - Xanadu Gallery

Jason Horejs is the Owner of **Xanadu Gallery**, author of best selling books "**Starving**" to **Successful** & **How to Sell Art**, publisher of **reddotblog.com**, and founder of **ARTsala**. Jason has helped thousands of artists prepare themselves to more effectively market their work, build relationships with galleries and collectors, and turn their artistic passion into a viable

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