

Possibilities Abound for Artist Holly Van Hart



Saratoga artist Holly Van Hart will exhibit at the Triton Museum of Art

By Melissa McKenzie

From high-tech to fine art, Saratoga artist Holly Van Hart has had quite the interesting career – and it’s just beginning.

Van Hart, a New York native, Stanford engineering graduate and former sales and marketing director, left behind the hustle and bustle of the booming Silicon Valley tech trade last year to focus on her passion – painting – and the gamble paid off. As the winner of the Triton Museum of Art’s 2013 Statewide Painting Competition and Exhibition, Van Hart will open her first

solo show at the museum in November, less than a week before celebrating another milestone – her 50th birthday.

“Possibilities Abound,” named after the piece which won her the top prize, features oil paintings within Van Hart’s “Possibilities” series – larger-than-life eggs settled in nests, symbolizing the possibilities and creativity that each of us has at birth.

With textured backgrounds and soft edges, Van Hart’s series goes deeper than just symbolizing life’s potential; they illustrate the darker side

of nature in a subtle way.

“I want the texture to be a reminder of things unseen,” says Van Hart. “So nature always has that underside. There are these nests and these eggs but they’re always at risk. There are predators around, [and] nests blow out of trees; things happen. So, that texture is meant to be a reminder of the other side of nature.”

Van Hart’s process for this series involves taking reference photos and creating the piece’s underlying texture with acrylic paint. She then sketches her idea on a canvas – using the same charcoal her mother used while attending art school – further adjusts the layout and decides on the color combinations she’ll use to come up with the overall look she wants before starting the oil painting.

“I don’t really want things painted tightly, but somehow it winds up that if you want something to look like an egg, or you want it to look like a nest, you have to get it right – the shapes right, the shadows right, the lighting right,” she says. “So I just wind up painting more tightly than I intend. Then I wait for it to dry and paint over it to make it a lot looser. So that way it can still look crisp, but softer.”

Van Hart’s home is her showroom and workspace, with the first floor occupying her studio and the remainder of the home serving as a gallery for her abstract landscape and realistic paintings, which are hung throughout. Her most prized art possessions, a self-portrait and paintings of her two sons and husband as a young boy, live at the entryway of the home.

“These are the only four [paintings] that I won’t part with,” says Van Hart.

“I feel like I’m very fortunate,” Van Hart says. “With the timing of everything, and the award at the Triton, there’s no better way to start [this career].”

Holly Van Hart: Possibilities Abound opens Sunday, Nov. 23 at the Triton Museum of Art, 1505 Warburton Ave. in Santa Clara. A reception is scheduled for Friday, Dec. 12

from 6-8 p.m. Visit http://tritonmuseum.org/exhibitions_HollyVanHart.php for more information about the show and <http://hollyvanhart.com/> to see Van Hart’s work.



Paintings done by artist Holly Van Hart of her family. Top: Her husband as a child, self portrait. Bottom: Her two sons.

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