

ARTBOOK^{OF THE NEW WEST}

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GAIL MORRIS

Profiles Biographies Insights Education

Gail Morris - *Sidewinder Canyon* oil on canvas 36" x 36"

Gail Morris

Artist profile by Clark David Olson



Evening – oil on canvas

Sophisticated Elegance

With her bold lines and fearless brush strokes, landscape painter Gail Morris has risen to the top as a master in her field. Using the themes of land, water and sky, Morris portrays the weight and gravity of these natural elements awash in color, with a subdued influence of light. Her keen instinct is a rare gift as she successfully blends the line between realism and abstraction.

One's eye is invited into her paintings via their pleasing visual colors, but what lies beneath the surface is a more complex story. Initially, one can recognize an intentional sense of symmetry, reminiscent of classic Greek design. This symmetry defines a clear focal point. Then, Morris carefully chooses her desired textures, often using an under painting technique which comprises her layering effect. Through the process of applying paint and sanding or rubbing it off, she creates an ethereal sense of luminosity. Many

have commented that her technique is a deconstruction of the landscape, being truthful to nature, then introducing her own interpretations of light, trees, and hillsides.

What brought Morris into the art world is as fascinating as her paintings. As a child Morris always had a knack for drawing and painting. While an art history major in college, her first professional assignment was as a photographer for the Joe Cocker Band, which allowed her to travel across the United States, Europe, and the Caribbean. This gave her an appreciation for a variety of landscapes. From these roots, she became a photojournalist who traveled to Africa and ultimately moved to San Francisco where she had a successful career in film and commercial television production. This permitted her to scout locations for her photo shoots, and increased her appreciation



The New West – oil on canvas



St. Anthony's – oil on canvas



Wilcox Playa – oil on canvas

of the landscape. After raising two daughters, by the mid 1990s Morris was ready for a significant change that pointed her in the direction of painting. When she lost her mother, father and best friend, all of whom were artists, she felt an obligation to continue their work. Ever since moving to California, she had studied the early California Impressionists, learning the ways they captured light, so she began painting small canvases outdoors. These personal studies were bolstered by workshops with such contemporary painters as Wolf Kahn, Michael Workman and Matt Smith. Not surprisingly, her works began to sell. Morris's aesthetic eye and paintbrush caused her to discard the camera and become a full time artist. In a relatively short period of time, she has captured the eye of collectors from coast to coast as well as in Canada, Mexico, Australia, Japan and Europe.

She has received critical acclaim from a host of sources, most recently from the award winning writer/director of *Pan's Labyrinth*, Guillermo del Toro. "Color and light form the very core of the art of painting. Gail Morris takes these principles to unexpected places. Her paintings can be both precise and expressive and her control of the medium is astonishing. Like Monet or Turner, Morris is in awe of her surroundings and is able to encapsulate her perception and mood, branding her canvases with an unequivocal sense of time and place. Snapshots of dawn, dusk or radiant sunlight etch themselves into our souls. They nest there and become memories—unlived but permanent and personal."