

EDUCATION SPECIAL

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Patrice Lombardi

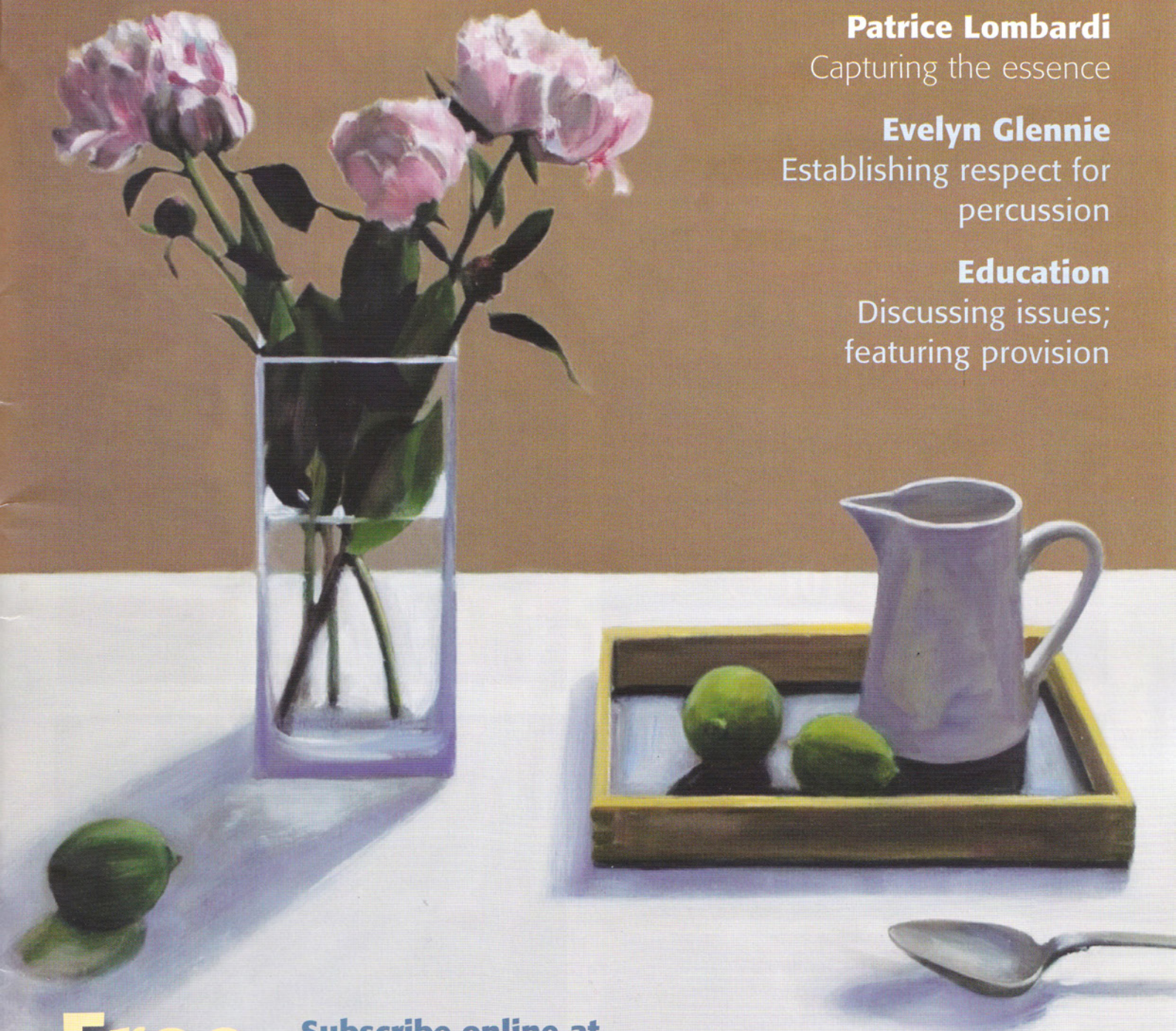
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patrice lombardi / rod shone

Born in Massachusetts, USA, Patrice Lombardi is the granddaughter of an Italian couple who, like millions of others, chose to emigrate to America in the early part of the 20th century. They left Italy on a boat just one week before the outbreak of World War 1. Patrice was always interested in art, and studied painting in Boston and Paris. While studying in Paris, and spurred on by an interest in Italian 14th and 15th century painting, she took the opportunity to visit Florence, where she was captivated by the culture of the city, finding much to appeal not only to her Italian heritage but also to her passion for painting. She made enquiries, applied and was accepted for a place at the Graduate School of Art at Villa Schifanoia, situated in San Domenico just outside and overlooking the city of Florence. At the time, Villa Schifanoia was the only graduate school for art outside the United States that offered an MFA (Master of Fine Art) degree.

Living in Italy was like coming home for Patrice – her family originally came from the small town of San Giovanni Incarico, mid-way between Rome and Naples. However one of the main attractions of Florence was that she was able to immerse herself in painting and drawing and, as she says, 'I could look at the work of Masaccio whenever I wished'.

It was at Villa Schifanoia that Patrice met her future husband, Richard Boardman, who was

Capturing the essence

A startling, bright, painterly beauty marks the work of artist **Patrice Lombardi**. To find out the story behind the work, **Rod Shone** caught up with Patrice after her recent move from Lucca, near Florence, to Wivenhoe in Essex





teaching drawing there. Patrice studied painting with the artist Enzo Faraoni. Most of the faculty who taught painting and printmaking were Italian, so Patrice quickly learned to speak Italian. Students were given individual studios in which to work – paradise for someone with the intention of doing serious work, and she embraced the opportunity fully and successfully. Her body of work created at Villa Schifanoia was exhibited in Boston, Massachusetts.

Patrice, primarily an oil painter, seeks to paint form, colour and light in a way that creates an image that transcends the original subject matter. Indeed, the light and study of the subject matter is the key to the way Patrice works, painstakingly adding and altering as many as 30 layers of paint on the canvas until she has achieved the result she is seeking. Working in this way can be risky, as the subject can be lost or become 'muddy'. But Patrice always manages to achieve a startling, bright, painterly beauty in her work. Her paintings encompass a wide range of subjects, chosen for their mystery, humanity and form, as well as for personal significance.

Since graduating, Patrice's creative output – and success – has been prolific. She has had 18 solo exhibitions and has participated in many group shows in Italy, the UK and in the United States. I have had the pleasure of attending nearly all her exhibitions in London, starting with *Objects and Window Studies* at the Andrew Usiskin Gallery in 1993. Since then her shows have included: *Recent Paintings*, London, 1998; *Objects in Light*, London 2000; *Recent Paintings*, London 2004; and *New Paintings*, London 2008. Her work is featured in private and corporate collections throughout the

world. She is also an accomplished portrait painter and regularly takes on commissions.

The last time I saw Patrice at work was in her studio in Lucca where she was painting irises in the bright Mediterranean light. She manages to give the same life and beauty to a chicken (*Chicken on gold* is one of my favourites), a flock of birds, a collection of butterflies and, surprisingly, to an artfully arranged collection of Dinky racing cars. She has also produced some strong but surprisingly austere studies of her garden statuary. These paintings came about when Patrice became artist in residence at the Villa La Pietra in Florence. She worked there for a period of two years and was able to use Sir Harold Acton's studio on a daily basis. This work was shown at the Medici Gallery in London in 2006.

Wivenhoe may be a far cry from Florence in terms of art and culture, but in reality the Essex town has much to offer. Up to the 1960s, it was a small riverside town with a small boat-building industry. It has always been a town that has attracted artists, however, and, with the building of nearby Essex University, it was revitalised. The painter Pam Dan and her late husband, potter John Dan, lived there. It was also the home of artists Richard Chopping and Denis Wirth Miller who occasionally excited



the locals with visits from their friend Francis Bacon. There is an entertaining account of such a visit involving Bacon, and the painters, Robert MacBride and Robert Colquhoun, in Roger Bristow's book *The Last Bohemians*. Following in their predecessor's footsteps, Patrice and Richard have recently transformed a disused sail loft into a studio and gallery in a secluded backwater of the town; it is providing an ideal home and work environment for both of them.

Patrice has always enjoyed teaching and has taught at several American Universities and at studios in Florence. She is now offering painting workshops at her studio, and in this way brings to Wivenhoe the studio culture that has worked so well in Italy for the past 600 years.

For more information about Patrice Lombardi's work and to arrange a workshop please visit: www.rwbpl.com, or T: 0778 0917800.

1
Assemblage
on the artist's
window sill

2
Peonies and
limes, oil on
canvas, 120 x
120cm, 2008

3
Chicken
on gold, oil
on canvas,
60 x 60cm,
2011

4
Statue and
pinetrees, oil
on canvas,
150 x 120cm,
2005

5
Patrice with
Parrot on red,
oil on canvas
20 x 25cm,
2014

