



*Leslie M. Nolan*

Front Cover: *Night Life*, Acrylic

Leslie Nolan has led a daring and accomplished life. She's worked undercover at the CIA, investigated white collar crime as a federal special agent, designed security plans for US Embassies in dangerous countries, and had colleagues kidnapped by terrorists posing as soccer players.

Through it all, she had a secret passion: art.

From Afghanistan to Peru and Patagonia, Nolan created black and white photographs that her colleagues eagerly hung on their walls. Her camera was a tool compatible with a badge and a gun. So from the intensity of an edgy day job, she retreated into the pitch black of the darkroom by night.

When Leslie Nolan finally had the time and space to paint in a dedicated way, she set herself to a challenge that can rival glacier ice trekking (which she's done): Making art that communicates the emotional intensity and the hectic beauty of the worlds she has traversed.

Leslie Nolan's recent work demonstrates a fountain of talent that resists being confined.

Having been highly trained to study

human gestures, she emerges as an uncanny figure painter who uses color and line to build a visual narrative of the individual depicted.

In Nolan's work, the landscape is a form of figure painting too.

Whether using watercolor, acrylic, or oil, Nolan's work consistently uses color to project the emotional stance and interior mood of a piece. Often, the narrative context of the figure—the individual's circumstances—are suggested by aspects of the composition especially the density of line, or the nature of space surrounding the individual.

*Night Life* and *Yellow Chair* are excellent examples of Nolan's ability to draw the viewer into a life portrait, providing visual clues to a real person's existence, while maintaining enough ambiguity that the viewer must conjure the story's *why?* and *what next?*

*Night Life* is a bar scene but it could almost be a ballet studio. A long-limbed woman in black tights and a shoulder-baring camisole confidently strides a stool. Her stance is relaxed, jaunty, but the distrustful look on her face spells cynic. More important, the composition—the way her head is cut off at her forehead at the top of the painting



and the prominent way her left knee juts toward the viewer like a thrust to the viewer's eye—tells us this is a woman in a semi-stable environment who must defend herself.

Nolan suggests a controlled chaos through the fast, wide white strokes that comprise the paintings background. Drama is added via bright blue horizontal lines of paint subtly breaking the background space and red accents to the woman's body and clothes.

*Yellow Chair* is a beautiful, somber portrait of a man alone, by a window. The vibrant central object, the chair, shimmers like a bright idea or an illusive dream or a...convenient object to sit on. He is alienated or self-sufficient. By turns, tentative and resolute. Since his facial features are obscure, the viewer must decide the details

But the sophisticated painterly arrangement of figure-window-chair, the balance between dense line and smoothed out passages, and the primal contrast between dark and light—these elements comprise an accomplished, poetic whole.

In Nolan's portrait there is a blur between the real and imagined.

Several of her long, vertical portraits of women appear to be the individual's projected self identity as much as the representational depiction of that person.

Fauvist color, reds zinging off blues, create a self-confident, "dare-me" figure in an untitled vertical piece. Calligraphic black inky gestures create another woman who averts her eyes. Washed in a blue which starts at her head and moves to the painting's lower right-hand corner this passage could symbolize her thoughts or public presentation.

*Wait* uses color as Vincent van Gogh or Pierre Bonnard did: Persimmon, fuscia, and goldenrod activate true optical excitement in the viewer's eyes which help create an impression of physical solidity and emotional tension about the figure herself. Blue squibs at the hair and belt and hem quietly anchor the piece. It is a gem.

Paintings such as *Working Boat* and *Isle #1* are portraits much like Nolan's figurative ones. In each, the central figure is conjured with lush colors that pulsate in response to the surrounding vibrancy. Nolan's use of lavender in *Isle #1* and tangerine in *Working Boat*

are particularly lyrical.

Painting is a complex adventure that eludes tentative minds and careworn hearts. Leslie Nolan's superb compositions are evidence of success in her ultimate, self-chosen assignment.

Eleanor Kennelly

*Eleanor Kennelly is a Washington, DC-based art critic who has written for ArtNews, Art & Antiques, Art and Auction and numerous European publications.*



*Reston #1, Mixed Media*

*Away, Acrylic on Canvas*



*The Wait, Water Media*





*Night Life-Rejection, Acrylic on Canvas*



*Isle #2, Water Media*





*Yellow Chair, Acrylic on Paper*



*Untitled, Acrylic On Board*

*Untitled, Acrylic On Board*



Since leaving a successful career in international affairs and security, Leslie Nolan has achieved significant recognition as an artist. She lives and paints in North Virginia.

#### AWARDS

2007	Joanne Rose Gallery, Virginia juried exhibition	Best in Show
	U.S. Geologic Survey Headquarters, Virginia	Honorable Mention
2006	U.S. Geologic Survey Headquarters, Virginia	First Place
	Capitol Hill Arts Gallery, Washington, D.C.	Second Best in Show
	Capitol Hill Arts Gallery, Washington, D.C.	Honorable Mention
2005	Art League Gallery, Virginia	Best in Show – Clemente Award
	Strathmore Hall, Maryland	Honorable Mention
	U.S. Geologic Survey Headquarters, Virginia	Equal Merit Award
2002	Quiet Waters Park, Maryland	Honorable Mention
2001	Historic Old Town Hall, Fairfax, Virginia	First Place
	Art League Gallery, Virginia	Honorable Mention
	Arts Council of Fairfax County, Virginia	Honorable Mention
2000	Art League Gallery, Virginia	Equal Merit Award
1998	Waterford Festival, Virginia	Honorable Mention

#### PUBLICATIONS

Elan Magazine March 2006 cover and featured interview

Washington Post newspaper June 29, 2007 photograph and feature of award winning painting

#### EXHIBITIONS (\* denotes solo exhibition)

2007	*Gallery A, Washington, D.C.
	*BB&T Bank, Herndon, Virginia
	*Systems Management Engineering Inc., Reston, Virginia
	*Whole Foods Market, Reston, Virginia
2006	*Comscore, Reston, Virginia
	University of Phoenix, Reston, Virginia (two-artist show)
	*Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, Bethesda, Maryland
	*Sprint/Nextel Headquarters, Reston, Virginia
	Northwest Watercolor Society Annual Juried International Exhibit, Seattle, Washington
	Southern Watercolor Society Annual Juried Exhibition, Richmond, Virginia
	Strathmore Hall juried Potomac Valley Watercolorists exhibit, Bethesda, Maryland
	GRACE (Greater Reston Arts Center) juried exhibit, Reston, Virginia
2005	Southern Watercolor Society annual juried exhibition, Florida
	GRACE juried exhibit, Reston, Virginia
2004	*Virginia Office of the Honorable James Moran, U.S. Congressman
2003	Strathmore Hall juried exhibit Potomac Valley Watercolorists, Bethesda, Maryland
2002	Washington Home and Garden Show, convention center Washington, D.C.
	Barnes and Noble Booksellers, Reston, Virginia
2001	Open Juried Exhibition Arts Council of Fairfax County, Virginia
	Gallery West national juried exhibition, Alexandria, Virginia
	Washington Home and Garden Show, convention center Washington, D.C.
2000	Open Juried Exhibition Arts Council of Fairfax County, Virginia

Nolan has exhibited in over 150 shows (including 66 juried competitions and 36 more solo shows) since 1998.

#### EDUCATION

Universidad de Madrid, Spain - Certificate

Portland State University, BA, French

The George Washington University, MS, Special Studies-Investigative Techniques

National Defense University, MS, National Security Resource Strategy



Cover: *Working Boat*, Water Media



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