

Chelsea Owens: Art as a Journey of Self-Discovery

By Jeannette Casillas / CASA

HAVING LIVED ABROAD IN ITALY FOR NEARLY A DECADE, Chelsea Owens has come “home” to share a series of new abstract works inspired by her journey of self-discovery and awareness between two cultures. Eleven of her contemporary oil paintings are on exhibit at the Santa Barbara Athletic Club through July 31st.

“There is a psychological undertone to my work,” shared Owens. “I’ve logged my personal journey of trying to find balance between two worlds and cultures.”

In 2003, Owens fell in love with an Italian, whom she married several years later, and moved to northern Italy with him. Limited by the language and labeled a “straniera” (foreigner), Owens found solace in her work and painting became her dominant form of communication.

“As a foreign woman in a dominantly male society, it became essential to fuse my identities from two diverse cultures,” Owens explained. “Often singled out, I developed a profound sensibility of the differences others

perceived in me. Through detachment, isolation, and exploration, my individuality steadily un.masks and illuminates itself through my art.”



Chelsea Owens



Via Vai, 8" x 12" March 2009, by Chelsea Owens

Although Owens finds her work to be rewarding, she has encountered technical challenges that motivate her and push her to be better. “I’m like a chemist mixing solutions. I keep trying until I get the right solution,” she shared. “It’s an amazing field of discovery. If I got everything right each time, then I wouldn’t have the drive that I do.”

Born and raised in Washington D.C., growing up, Owens

remembers doodling with her father and collaborating on several creative projects from mural paintings to theatrical design. “You don’t grow up thinking, ‘I want to be an artist,’” shared Owens. “I couldn’t help but be an artist. I never aspired to be one. It was simply in my nature.”

In high school, Owens attended classes at the Corcoran School of Art and developed a portfolio that captured the eyes of art professors at the University of Massachusetts

at Amherst. One of them was Paul Berube, a studio art professor who became one of her significant influences and a mentor. “He saw that I had a creative eye and pushed me to seek out my creative flair in California,” she shared.

With a foundation in Fine Arts, Owens transferred to the Academy of Art University in San Francisco to pursue a career in multimedia and production design. While in San Francisco she produced a body of work that was recognized and featured in numerous AAU film festivals and the A/Journal magazine.

After graduating she moved to Los Angeles to pursue film production, helping design the sets for a feature film and Pink’s *Trouble* MTV music video. While in L.A. Owens met her husband and the rest is history.

Last fall Owens came “home” to Santa Barbara, where she had purchased a home with her husband in 2007, to give birth to her son, Gray. “I’ve been here since last November,” Owens shared. “This is the longest that I’ve been home since moving to Italy.”

Owens plans



The Gene Factory, 40" x 48" May 2010, by Chelsea Owens

to begin working towards an MFA in fine arts/painting at the Academy of Art University in San Francisco in the Spring of 2012 and also plans to continue commuting between southern California and Italy. She has exhibited artwork in Italy and the United States and has donated paintings to numerous benefit art auctions.



Nexus, oil on canvas, 20" x 20", January 2010, by Chelsea Owens

The Santa Barbara Athletic Club is located at 520 Castillo St and is open Mo-Fr 5am-10:30pm; Sa 6am-8pm; and Su 7am-8pm. For more information visit www.chelseao-wens.com.