

# Journeys from Home



Four American Painters



I am honored to write this introductory letter for the “Journeys from Home.” catalogue. As a nation, Americans celebrate diversity and the positive synergy emerging from a multitude of cultures and traditions. Such joy is evident in the whirling paintings of dancers painted by Beverly Ryan. Yet particularly for those of us who are recent arrivals, we also experience some loneliness due to living beyond the limits and comforts of our cultures of origin. Solitude’s colors, as well as its grandeur, can be seen in the powerful depictions of collective memory offered by Nena Gonzalez Thayer – and through a different lens in the perfectly solitary houses of Sheep Jones, harmonious in the landscape despite their isolation. Eleanor Kotlarik Wang expands our boundaries, layering music into her mixed media and hence bringing all of our senses into play, while still striking that occasional blue note as in “Through the Beyond.” I am glad that this exhibit about “Journeys from Home” is now traveling through Central Europe, bringing its stories of integration and celebration to a region also rich in diversity.

**Lora Berg**

*Cultural Attaché*

*U.S. Embassy Bratislava, Slovakia*

*This unique body of contemporary paintings represents interpretations of the theme “Journeys from Home” by four American artists. Each artist explores the idea of “home” using her own approach to paint handling, her own vocabulary of forms, and her own vision. Cultural identity, each artist’s roots, and her identification with locations undoubtedly have had some influence on these efforts.*

*Nena Gonzalez Thayer develops “home” as it relates to her ancestral and cultural roots. Eleanor Kotlarik Wang searches for the essence of spaces while exploring forms from nature. Sheep Jones investigates depicts the humble shed as “home” as she explores its role in rural landscapes and in the passage of time. And Beverly Ryan takes a look at the psychological side of our “home” in western culture. All share an interest in art theory and its relationship to their creation of authentic and meaningful work. This collection of paintings offers a unique view of America – a nation of a melting pot of nationalities and freedom, the destination of people from diverse cultures who have come to seek new lives and create new homes.*



## Nena Gonzalez Thayer

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Nena was born and raised in Guadalajara, Mexico and came to the United States more than 22 years ago. She studied art in Vienna, Austria; Edinburgh, Scotland; Madrid, Spain; The Corcoran School of Art and Design in Washington, DC, and the Art League School in Alexandria, Virginia. Her work has appeared in shows and juried exhibits and received awards in the United States and Europe, and is in private collections in Europe, Mexico, and throughout the U.S.

*These paintings are on canvas, with layers of collage that represent the passage of my life experiences. The use of sand in my work captures the wonderful feeling sense of a substance running through one's fingers while the earthy tones of clay and tiles hearken back to my Mexican ancestry. These images are explored as landscapes and cityscapes, which are evocative of memories from my time living among different cultures. The paintings all share an integration of real and surreal imagery that creates a sense of dreamy mystery. Some elements of my way of handling of perspective create the illusion of spaces jumping in and out of the surface. This effect challenges the viewer to further explore the paintings in a playful interchange of conscious and ethereal reality.*

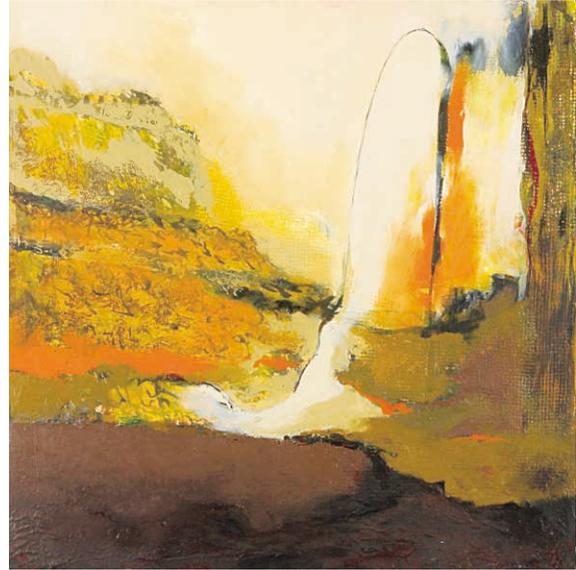


**Nostalgic # 2** *Mixed media on canvas, 18 x 18 in. (46 x 46 cm)*



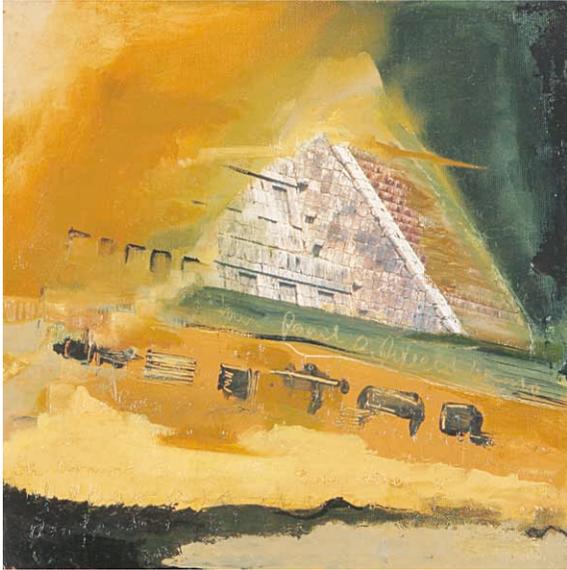
**Nostalgic # 1**

*Mixed media on canvas, 12 x 12 in. (30,5 x 30,5 cm)*



**Persistence**

*Mixed media on canvas, 20 x 20 in. (50 x 50 cm)*



### **Inside Outside**

*Mixed media on canvas, 12 x 12 in. (30,5 x 30,5 cm)*



### **Journey to the Past**

*Mixed media on canvas, 30 x 30 in. (76 x 76 cm)*



## Sheep Jones

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Sheep Jones was born and grew up in Maine. She studied art the University of Maine in Portland. She works in watercolor, oil, and etching, and she has exhibited her paintings and prints in several solo and group shows and galleries in Washington, DC; Alexandria, Virginia; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and Portland, Maine. She teaches watercolor at the Art League School, and the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia. She splits her time between living in the Washington DC area and in Belfast, Maine.

*This series of sheds are from memories of my travels around the countryside of Maine with my family. Sheds are often solitary, some dilapidated, some housing families. Sheds are certainly man-made artifacts. Utilitarian in intent, yet sheds often have an informal, almost improvisational air about them. They are their own catalogs of their use and wear. I locate the sheds in the paintings in stark, simple landscapes, where a bluntly colored sky, a plane of a body of water, and earth, both at the surface and under, come together. The effect I am after in these paintings is a balance between a sense of enclosure and exterior, between decay and natural growth. At the same time, the classic structure of the landscape contrasts with the somewhat disheveled casualness of the shed.*



**Landlocked** Oil on panel, 12 x 12 in. (30,5 x 30,5 cm)



### **Shelters**

*Oil on panel, 12 x 12 in. (30,5 x 30,5 cm)*



### **How Does One Approach**

*Oil on panel, 12 x 12 in. (30,5 x 30,5 cm)*



**Enshrine**

*Oil on panel, 12 x 12 in. (30,5 x 30,5 cm)*



**Threnody**

*Oil on panel, 12 x 12 in. (30,5 x 30,5 cm)*



## Eleanor Kotlarik Wang

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Eleanor Kotlarik Wang was born in Pittsburgh, and spent her early childhood in her father's homeland near Trencin, Slovakia. At age five the family relocated to her mother's family base in Chicago, Illinois. She studied at Southern Illinois University; the Catholic Institute in Paris, France; Mira Costa College; Meramec College; the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C.; the Art League School of Alexandria, Virginia; and the Vermont Studio Center in Johnson, Vermont. Her paintings have appeared in various juried and solo exhibits. Her work is in private and corporate collections in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. Several of her paintings are currently on exhibit at the U.S. Consulate General in Hong Kong in conjunction with the State Department's Art in Embassies Program.

*The power, beauty, and dignity of Nature have a mysterious and spiritual attraction for me. This collection of drawings and paintings is my artistic response to that calling. The paintings are generated references to trees and landscapes seen or remembered from walks taken in the gray autumns and winters of Virginia and Vermont. Layers of drawing paint and collage fuse to complete the images, which have become increasingly richer in surface quality. My intent was for each painting to evoke a different sense of mystery and wonder. These works are imaginary landscapes that are intended to represent places of refuge and harmony where the viewer can rest and contemplate before continuing or perhaps beginning another journey.*



**Yonder** *Mixed media on canvas, 12 x 12 in. (30,5 x 30,5 cm)*



**Beyond the Vista** *Mixed media on canvas, 12 x 36 in. (30,5 x 91,5 cm)*



**Harmony # I** *Mixed media on canvas , 12 x 12 in. (30,5 x 30,5 cm)*



**Autumn Journey** *Mixed media on paper, 11 x 23 in. (28 x 58,5 cm)*



**Before Spring's Song** *Mixed media on paper, 2 x 10 in. (30,5 x 25,5 cm)*

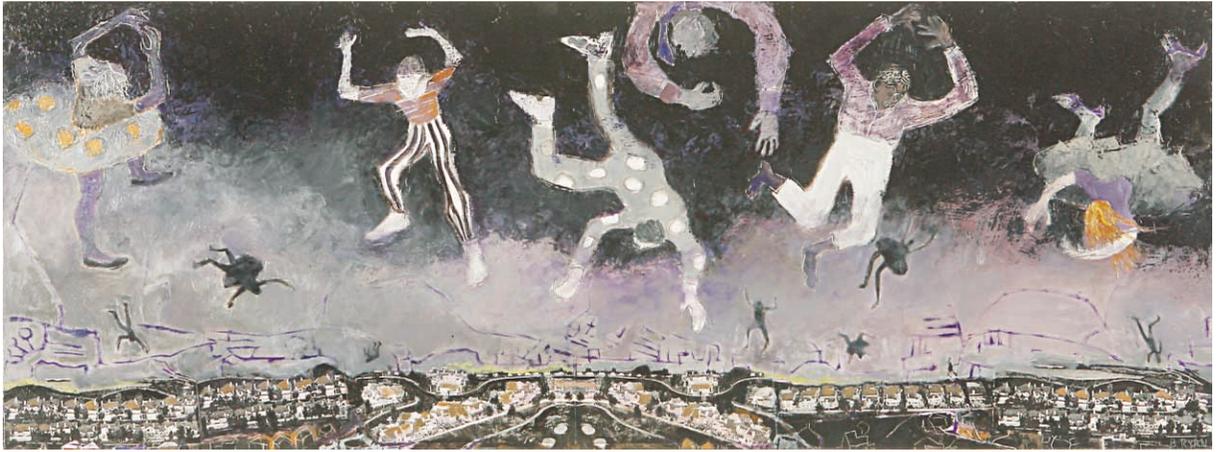


## Beverly Ryan

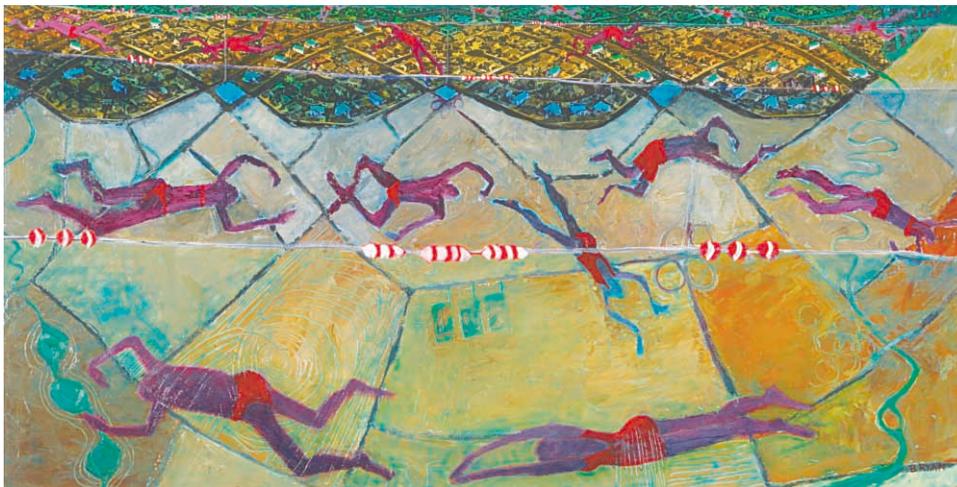
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Beverly Ryan grew up in Pennsylvania. Her interest in art began as a child, as she explored crafts, paper doll making, designing, and sewing clothes for her dolls and later for herself. Her academic education led her into the sciences but she returned to art-making by way of hand weaving and textile design during her years at home raising her daughter. A strong interest in working with more personal imagery has become evident in her explorations in printmaking and painting. Nonobjective and figurative painting is her main form of expression today.

*I have metaphorically journeyed from the “home” of a hoped-for feeling of identification with my culture to a place of concern and misgivings. Painting offers me a way to explore this psychological distance in an intuitive manner. Working in oil paint on wooden panels, I aspire to realize an oblique treatment of the following ideas: failure, as a culture, to consider the larger implications of our choices on our planet and on the human spirit; how a comfortable lifestyle can change one’s priorities; how the implied safety and harmony in tidy subdivision living feels superficial at best; and how inoculating oneself against the wired/wireless/online culture is nearly impossible.*



**Falling into the Lap of Luxury** *Mixed media on panel, 12 x 32 in. (30,5 x 89 cm)*



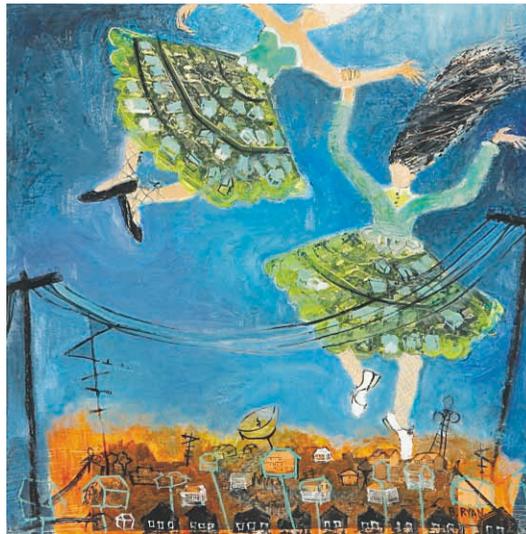
**In Our Lap Lanes** Oil on panel, 14 x 28 in. (35,5 x 71 cm)



**Balance in an Illusion** Oil on panel, 14 x 14 in. (35,5 x 35,5 cm)



**Escape Routes** *Oil on panel, 14 x 28 in. (35,5 x 71 cm)*



**Unplugged and Acrobatic** *Oil on panel, 14 x 14 in. (35,5 x 35,5 cm)*

Nena Gonzalez Thayer



Sheep Jones



Eleanor Kotlarik Wang



Beverly Ryan



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