



A Tuscan Reverie

by Sheryl
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If all this cold and wet weather has made you pine for warmer climes, consider a visit to the Pamela Walsh Gallery in Palo Alto, where the work of Marin-based painter Andrew Faulkner is on view. This solo exhibition, the third for Faulkner in this gallery, is made up of 20 oil-on-canvas paintings that resulted from a trip to Italy last year. "Tuscan Light," a landscape series that will take you vicariously to sunny Italy, is on display through March 4.

Walsh, who is celebrating three years in her Ramona Street space, said that the idea for the show was conceived last summer when she learned that Faulkner was traveling to Italy in order to study with famed Spanish colorist Carlos San Millán. "It was just an idea," she said. "In concept, you hope that the idea generates creative



"Uffizi Vista" 48" x 38" - oil on canvas

inspiration that will ultimately become paintings worthy of an exhibition. It doesn't always work out that way, but when it does, it is exhilarating."

Faulkner, in remarks at the exhibition opening, said that Italy has always held a special place in his heart. A childhood trip with family ignited his interest, which led to a stint as a foreign exchange student in Rome when he was in high school. The opportunity to study with Millán, known for his mastery of color and abstracted landscapes — in a 1,000-year-old villa in Tuscany — was too good to pass up. When asked what the biggest takeaway was from the workshop, Faulkner replied, "Think

more, paint less." How this translated into the paintings in this series is "pausing for more considered strokes and color mixing choices." In addition, he began using larger palette knives. "This has simplified some of my larger color areas."

"Uffizi Vista" by Andrew Faulkner is on view as part of the "Tuscan Light" show at Pamela Walsh Gallery. Courtesy Pamela Walsh Gallery.

Walking around the gallery, there is no doubt that these are views from Tuscany, both in Florence and the countryside. Recognizable sites like the Ponte Vecchio bridge, Brunelleschi's Duomo cathedral, the Campanile of Giotto and the Uffizi Gallery are represented in the glorious, golden light that is so characteristic of this region. The artist also traveled into the outlying countryside, where rolling hills and cypress trees are hallmarks of this celebrated wine-growing landscape. Faulkner worked in plein air but did not create the paintings on site, instead utilizing his skills as a graphic designer to make preliminary digital sketches.



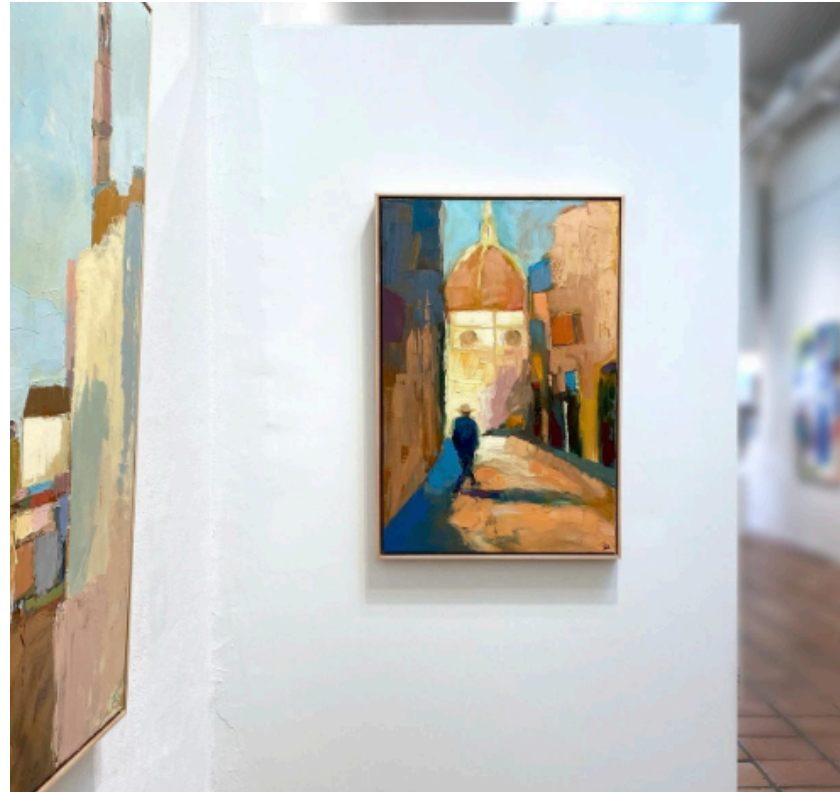
**"Luce Della Cita" 48" x 48" &
"Piccolo Universo" - 48 x 60"**
-oil on canvas

"I had a design studio for 30 years and Adobe Software was one of my largest clients," said Faulkner. "I became an expert in using creative digital tools." Most of the pieces in the show were sketched digitally and then painted in oils. Upon his return from Italy, all 20 paintings were executed in a three-month period. Said Walsh, "There is a freshness to his approach and palette that was definitely emboldened by his trip to Tuscany."

That boldness is evident in Faulkner's treatment of the Ponte Vecchio ("Ponte Vecchio Revisited"). Yes, there is depiction of the famous span in its entirety, but then he hones in on just a small portion of the structure for a close-up, enlarged view. He explained that this was a method of "deconstruction" born out of curiosity. "I am always looking for ways to abstract the landscape and distill a sense of light to its most base level." The result is like adjusting a camera lens to see one area in more detail, while the surrounding area becomes blurred. All of this is rendered in lush strokes of ochre for the structure that are countered by cool tones of blue and green for the waters of the river Arno.

"I think color is like a chemistry set. If you add too much or too little into a mixture, it can throw it out of balance. My work is all about

"Passeggiata" 30" x 20"
- oil on canvas



experimenting with colors, light/dark, cool/warm, bold/subtle,"
Faulkner said of his color choices.

That experimentation is on full view in "Tetti" (rooftops), where mainly rectangular blocks of color create, in the sparest manner, structures that abut and overlap each other. The warm oranges and yellows are offset and balanced by areas of aqua and turquoise, all leading the eye to a pale blue sky. The artist made reference to the "earthiness" of the country, as he has depicted in "Cipressi" and "Sul Lago." But he is clearly not out to make literal representations of these scenic places, as can be seen in several paintings that are totally abstract like "Luccicare (Shimmer)." Often, however, there is just enough of a familiar landmark, like the steeple in "Lucia della Citta," to root you in this atmospheric setting.

Back in Florence, a tourist destination that is usually crowded at all times of the year, Faulkner chose to depict a tranquil scene on a street leading to the Duomo.

In "Passeggiata" (a casual stroll usually taken in the evening), a solitary figure strides towards the cathedral. Flanked by buildings rendered loosely in tones of burnt orange (with an occasional pop of blue), the man is blissfully alone and all is still and quiet under the Tuscan sun. It's a charming scene and unusual for Faulkner, who rarely includes figures in his landscapes. "I thought this man added a sense of scale and some movement to the piece," he said. Look carefully at the right side of this painting and you will see a crudely incised drawing of a chair. It is not your imagination but, said the artist, a signature of sorts. "It represents the primitive stroke a child would make, embracing the primitive nature of innocent and imperfect marks."