

On Blooms and Ninnies

BY RANDY NOLES, Winter Park Magazine



Flag demonstrates Lynn Whipple's mastery at using whatever she happens to find — especially old photographs — to create whimsical works of art.



Lynn painting in the studio.

Winter Park residents John and Lynn Whipple are among Central Florida's most highly regarded artistic spouses.

He's known for his sometimes spooky mixed-media creations, which can encompass sprockets, springs, machine parts, farm implements, bird cages, doorknobs, light

fixtures and other assorted flotsam. Some of his work, writes local arts columnist Michael McLeod, “resembles a *Greatest Show on Earth* parade that’s been infiltrated by the cast of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.”



Whipple's colorful studio is an inspiration unto itself.



Whipple is a native Winter Parker who, as a child, was surrounded by art. As an adult, she still is.

John Whipple's accomplished wife is also a mixed media artist, known for her more whimsical and playful creations — especially her series of “Ninnies,” which are old photographs altered with paint and the addition of words or titles. (“Ninnies” are what she and her sisters called people who were acting silly, Lynn Whipple explains.)

More recently, she's been experimenting with floral still lifes of flowers through what she had dubbed her Big Bold Bloom series. It features vivid colors and layers of what Whipple describes as “yummy, drippy paint.”

The Whipple's had been members of McRae Art Studios, a collective of 22 artists who, from 1998 until September of 2016, shared studio space in a warehouse on Railroad Avenue near Winter Park Village.

Its first headquarters, on McRae Avenue near Florida Hospital, was rented in 1986 by Whipple's parents, the late George Whipple and his wife, Marty, a jewelry artist. There were several moves after that.

But that collective lost its lease on the Railroad Avenue complex late last year and had been temporarily homeless, at least professionally speaking.

Late last year, however, the band of creators reached an agreement with ArtReach Orlando, a Winter Park-based not-for-profit that provides art programming for children in underserved communities, either through schools or through its mobile art truck. ArtReach, founded by former addiction counselor Binkley Wilson, purchased a 10,000-square-foot warehouse in the Parramore area that's currently being renovated to serve as ArtReach's headquarters and to accommodate the former McRae artists.

Because the new facility is near the street from the new Parramore K-8 school, both McRae and ArtReach plan to host after-school art workshops for students and neighbors. It was nearing completion at presstime.

John Whipple's art will be featured in an upcoming issue of *Winter Park Magazine*. This issue, however, we chat with Lynn Whipple and take a look at her work — both the bizarre (but intriguing) older pieces and the exuberant new Big Bold Blooms.

We also discuss her life as an artist and the new creative directions she has taken. For more information about Lynn Whipple's work, visit lynnwhipple.com.

Tell us about growing up in Winter Park.

As a kid, I spent all my time outdoors, either swimming, playing with our pets or romping around in nature. My favorite thing was collecting rocks, sticks, leaves and little pieces of beauty.

I spent hours arranging my nature finds in small groupings. We laugh now that I was an installations artist at a young age. I went on to create art for living. [Husband] John and I

spend our time working in our studios, traveling to art shows and teaching workshops both online, across the country and internationally.

What inspired you to become an artist?

I would say that the beauty I found in nature sparked me to become an artist. That, and my family. I grew up surrounded by books, artists and art.

My mom, Mary, taught creative writing at Winter Park High School and sailing at Rollins College. She's also a painter and a sculptor. My granddad was a wonderful still-life painter when he retired. The smell of turpentine always makes me think of him and my oldest sister.

I was inspired daily by my family, and was always encouraged to make things with my hands. As luck would have it, I married into another artful family. Living and working around others artists can open you up to all kinds of creative possibility.

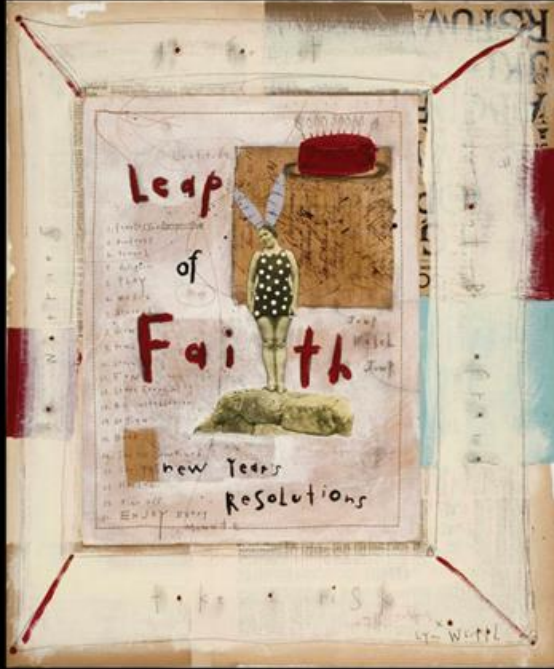
Your mixed-media work, such as the Ninny series, is pretty far out. Tell us what was in your mind when you created these.

The Ninny series was started on a whim in our kitchen. John and I were testing several different colors to repaint our kitchen and the exterior of the house. I grabbed an odd photograph from the late 1800s that was on our fridge. I'd found it at a flea market.

With a big brush and a greenish brown paint, I changed the shape of the person in the photo, turning her body into a bug with wings. It was so funny to me that I kept painting on old photos using house paint. Then I drew on top of the paint, adding small details and sometimes words or titles.

The single Ninnies were mounted onto small wooden boxes, and often hung in a series. Later they made their way into bigger boxes, and were combined with found objects.

The best thing about the Ninny series is that I still love doing them — and they still make me laugh.



NINNIES

Now you're doing big, colorful florals — quite a contrast. Why did you switch?

Another accident! I co-taught an online art class called “Year of the Spark” with fellow artist Carla Sonheim. We each filmed a monthly creativity/art lesson. Carla had filmed a drawing exercise that I was doing on a large piece of paper.

Halfway through the project, I looked up and noticed a big pot of fresh flowers in my studio. I just started painting them, with vibrant, juicy color, putting the paint right on top of the drawings. The Big Bold Bloom series was born that day, and I haven’t looked back.

This free-flowing approach takes traditional subject matter and combines it with so much of what I love to do as an artist — play with design, color, layering, drawing and yummy, drippy paint.

I’ve thoroughly enjoyed sharing this process in workshops online and in person. We’ve built a fantastic community of artists affectionately called the “Bloomers.” I’m incredibly grateful to be a part of such a bighearted and fun group of creatives.



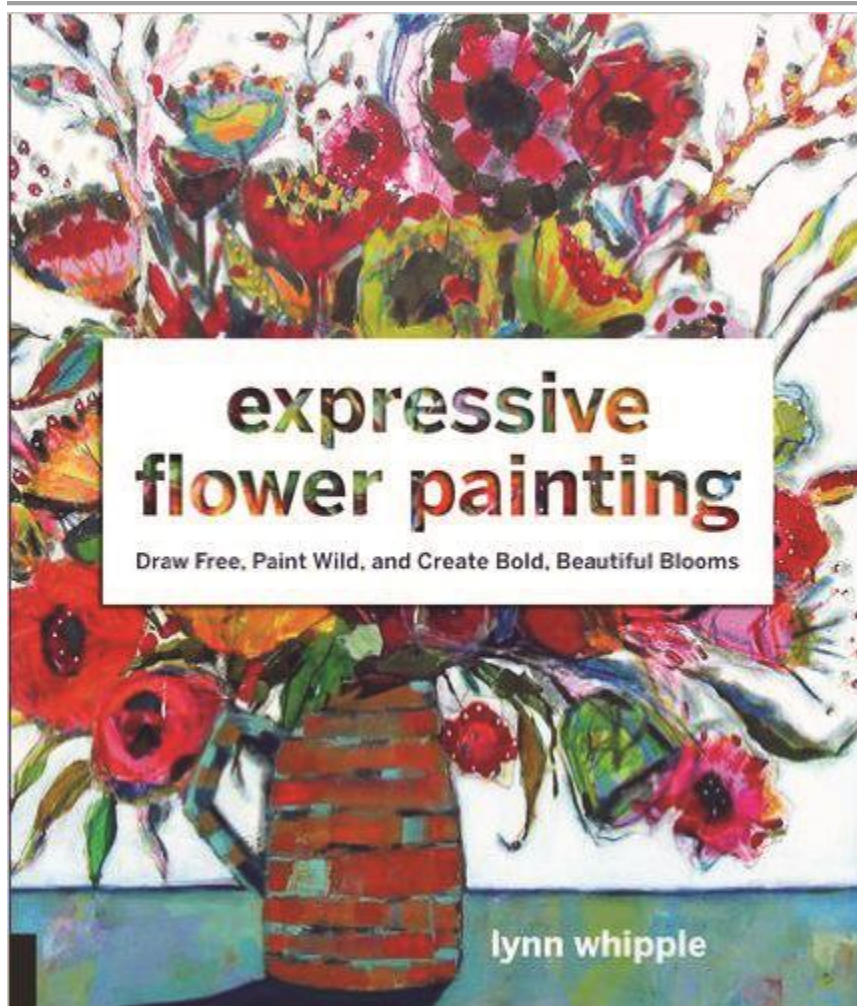
BLOOMS

What artists (current and past) inspire you?

I've been inspired by so many artists and musicians. One that comes to mind immediately is Andy Goldsworthy, who works in nature by rearranging things found in the natural world and photographing the process.

Much of his work will quickly or eventually decay, which in itself is a gorgeous process. Another wonderful and inspiring artist for me is Paul Klee. The childlike quality to his paintings and drawing have an underpinning of sophistication and joy. I especially am drawn to the puppets that Klee created for his son, made out of burlap, string and found objects.

Don Sondag, an oil painter in our studio, also inspires me with his smart use of color and his fresh approach to painting.



How to Create Your Own Big Bold Wild Blooms

Lynn Whipple's first book is coming out this summer. *Expressive Flower Painting, Techniques for Big Bold Blooms* (Quarry Books) was inspired by her Big Bold Wild Bloom painting classes.

"The classes helped me create a process that encourages freedom, play and joy in painting by working in layers," she says. The book is filled with photographs by Orlando photographer Terri Zollinger.

Expressive Flower Painting presents a range of creative painting exercises that help readers develop vibrant nature paintings. The book discusses mark making, layering techniques, how to do "spin drawings," color methods, painted backgrounds, working from life and how to successfully combine a wide variety of media for maximum effect.

You can find it now on Amazon.com, and it will be available in bookstores later this year.

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