



Rhythm of Wild Water

The coral wall detailed in this painting features fish found mainly in, but not limited to, the Indo-Pacific Oceans. Here, you see white-collar butterfly fish, raccoon butterfly fish and black-backed butterfly fish swimming alongside angelfish, reef goldfish and the emperor snapper. Sea urchins reside quietly while a red grouper, also known as the coral trout, watches from nearby.



Eye of the Beholder

The artist is fascinated by the flamboyant hues and distinctive design of this particular fish species, called a wrasse. The fish's abstract qualities inspired Stail to paint a work that functions not only as a lifelike detail, but also as an artistic design. Allowing the fish's natural colors to create a path for the viewer's eye, this piece depicts just an upper portion of the face of the wrasse.



Genesis

The spark of Nicole's inspiration for Genesis came from the beautiful and intriguing coral reefs, found in the Atlantic Ocean, near the Turks and Caicos Islands. She and her husband photographed the coral finger formations that you see in this painting, while they were on holiday there. Reefs such as these often play host to numerous "cleaner fish" who transform the reef into a sort of cleaning station. Here, large sea animals, such as this green sea turtle, can come to be freed of the myriad of parasites and algae that cover their bodies. It is an arrangement that works out well for all, as the fish receive a hearty meal, and the turtle is accommodated with a cleaner, lighter body.



A reader most of her life, Joanne Swanson, now 48, taught herself to paint in watercolor. It began with a desire to present her husband, Chip, a gift on Christmas Day in 1993. Watercolor was chosen for its many challenges.

"People have said my paintings are full of color, full of joy of life. Because I simply love to paint I can get lost in painting. I continually challenge myself to apply what I have read and like to push myself to be a better painter."



She graduated from Unalakleet's Covenant High School in 1971 having never taken an art class. She entered college but soon quit. She later gained self-confidence through her marriage to Lee Eckels, a Ryan Air pilot.

She never even picked up a paintbrush until six years ago. Now her original works and prints are sold in galleries.



"My hope is that when you view my work, it causes you, for a moment, to just be still ... to focus on the sacredness of life. Perhaps it will even trigger, in you, wonder for the One who so thoughtfully designed, and lovingly created, our world," says Stahl. "The earth is teeming with life abundant, and while we are here, we must enjoy it fully and protect it carefully, as those who have been given an invaluable and precious gem."



'I began this semi-abstract painting with a desire to do an abstract. I love mixing complementary colors wet-in-wet. I often will spend whole painting sessions just mixing colors. For the background I set the paper on the floor and dropped masking fluid somewhat randomly. Then I spattered, gold gessoed, salted, waxed, scraped and tilted the paint on the paper. After all that dried I turned the paper on its sides, up-side-down and "found" a right side up. Eventually I saw a lady wearing a beautiful parka doing something. That something was untangling Christmas lights oblivious to everything else around her. Using my daughter as inspiration I carefully added a little girl in a matching parka waiting impatiently to put up the star. The next wonderful challenge was when to quit. As always, hopefully, this is my favorite painting so far.'