

Larsen & Daughters, Vancouver's Family of Artists: Cowgirl Zen, white space, and the power of simple things

Veils of creams, whites, and grainy-greys. Breathing spheres. A fingerprint of red. Many who experience a painting of Patricia Larsen's think it's the work of a Zen monk, someone who's mastered the elements of purity -- but it's Larsen's memories of Albertan prairies that melt into her uncomplicated images...spacious, lyrical and alive.

Visitors most often refer to her Vancouver studio-gallery as "a breathing space". Part workshop, part sanctuary, it's not only the creative venue to Patricia Larsen but to her two daughters: Janaki, a twenty-nine year old graduate of Emily Carr who divides her time between set design for television and spinning pottery; and Klee, who, at eighteen balances hockey practice and designing and selling her own jewellery line.

Recently featured in *Canadian House & Home*, *Vancouver Fashion*, and *Style at Home*, Patricia didn't begin formal art studies (Emily Carr, Alberta College of Art, U of Calgary, and Red Deer College) until she was in her thirties, in between travelling the world, solo shows and eventually owning her own gallery.

Larsen collectors seem to be most stirred by what she defines as "*the gift inside.*" In Larsen's world, "*beauty comes from uncovering what's beneath. I strip away what's obvious or extra. I tear away to get to the beauty-- sometimes it's in the resistance, sometimes it's in complete surrender.*"

Her preferred expression these days is painting on large boards, using both muted and sheer colours, acrylic, oils, shellacs, and whatever organic materials are in hand's reach – from clay dust particles to crumbs of corroded metal.

The appreciation for form and simplicity seems to be a genetic trait with the Larsen women. Patricia and Janaki's bisque-white ceramic pots breathe with sensuality. Found objects – a rusted chain link, odd shaped marbles, and tree branches – line their handmade shelves. The vibe is warm and playful. The intention is clear: love and cherish beauty. No artistic suffering, no politics, just the unadorned celebration of line, elements and shape.

The result is a magnificently sweet relief.

Larsen's studio is located at 2665 Maple Street south of West Broadway. For images and more of Patricia Larsen's inspiration, visit: www.patricialarsen.com

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