



Joan Brancale

PAINTER/MURALIST

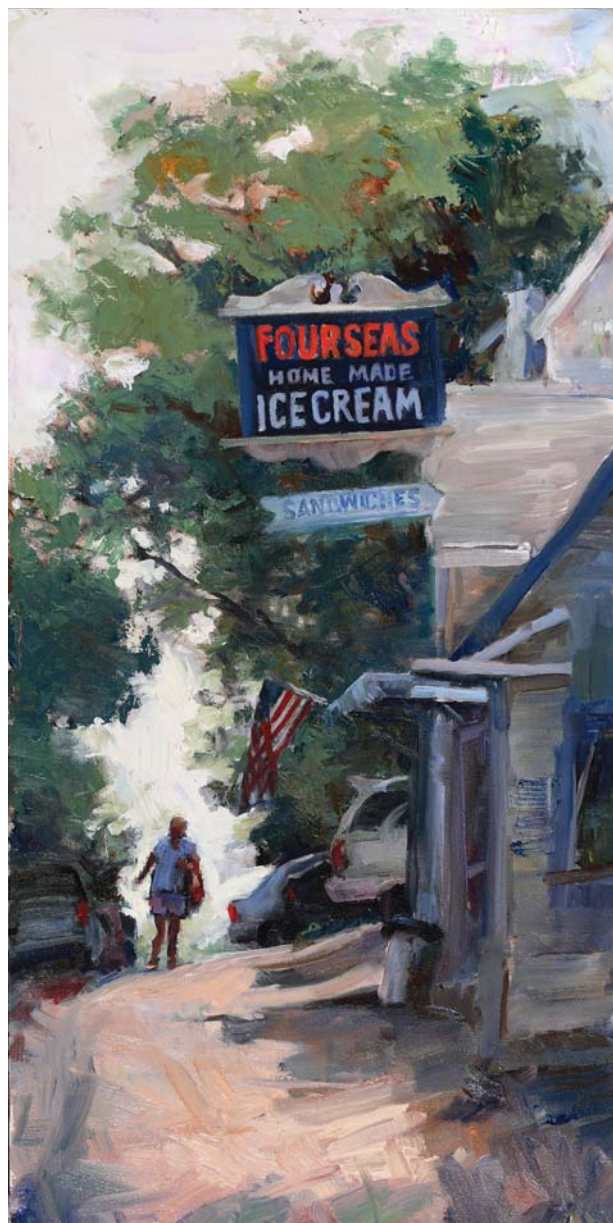
"I would have loved to live in a different era," says Joan Brancale in a voice that is wistful, but not sad: a way you could also describe her paintings. The color-saturated oils frequently depict scenes near her summer cottage on Wrinkle Point in West Dennis, and the images captured range from a tumbledown house on a bluff to children reveling in the cold spray from an outdoor shower. Whatever the subject matter, and however simple it may appear at first glance, Brancale's paintings trigger an emotional response from the observer that stems from the artist's own appreciation of the scene. "I take a chance moment of visual delight and develop a painting idea," says Brancale in her artist's statement. "It is often a split-second response to a view, experience, or circumstance that compels me to set down a memory." If it doesn't strike a chord in the artist herself, it will never reach the canvas for others to enjoy.

Brancale, who earned an MFA in Theatre Design at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, attributes much of her artistic style to the years she spent as a set designer. Now, as in her earlier career, she prepares for her work by sketching a lot of design roughs, taking numerous photos, and making a folder of prints of other artists who have captured the flavor she is striving for. Once all the ingredients have percolated to the point where she is ready to paint, the result is remarkably spontaneous. Her goal is to get the composition just right, and if it means a lot of time spent planning, so be it. "I'm blessed with a lot of patience," she says with a smile, "and I'm really critical."

In her painting, as she did in her theatre work, Brancale uses lighting to dramatize an effect. She enjoys setting the stage, and the mood she wants to impart is clear. Take dilapidated houses, for example, a favorite subject of the artist. For Brancale, each one has a unique personality: a barn on the Bass River is "happy," another structure

past its prime "looks like it has a lot of family memories."

While at the moment she prefers painting landscapes, when people are incorporated in the scene, Brancale allows her love of storytelling to come into play. Often there's a whimsical bent, as in "Can You Hear Me Now?,"?





Above, clockwise from left: *Cold Shower*, *Everywhere Signs*, and *Say Cheese*. Opposite: *I Scream for Ice Cream*.

a recent work that depicts a stocky, swimsuited woman standing on the periphery of a family beach, cell phone pressed impatiently to her ear. The situation is familiar, the painting accessible to the observer. "It is easy to find something lovely or poignant in local everyday scenes," says Brancale, pointing in turn to each of a dozen or so canvases laid out on the dining room table of her antique house in Hingham, where she has lived with her husband, Bob, since 1982. The paintings range from small (6" x 8") to mid-size (16" x 20" or so), mainly because the artist feels that smaller formats are more suitable to the quiet or quirky subject matter that she favors. "I would like to get a little more abstract and simplified," she says.

Brancale describes herself as intuitive and empathetic.

Helen Addison, owner of Addison Gallery in Orleans, who has represented the artist since 2001, elaborates: "Joan's unexpected compositions, splashes of color, and brave brush strokes reflect her adventurous nature and the joy she finds in the world around her." A joy, one might add, that spills over to all those who view her art.—*Janice Randall Rohlf*

See Joan Brancale's work at Addison Art Gallery in Orleans (508-255-6200)

Janice Randall Rohlf is editor in chief of Cape Cod Life Publications.