

PERSONALITIES

Joanna Zjawinska



Painter of Passion

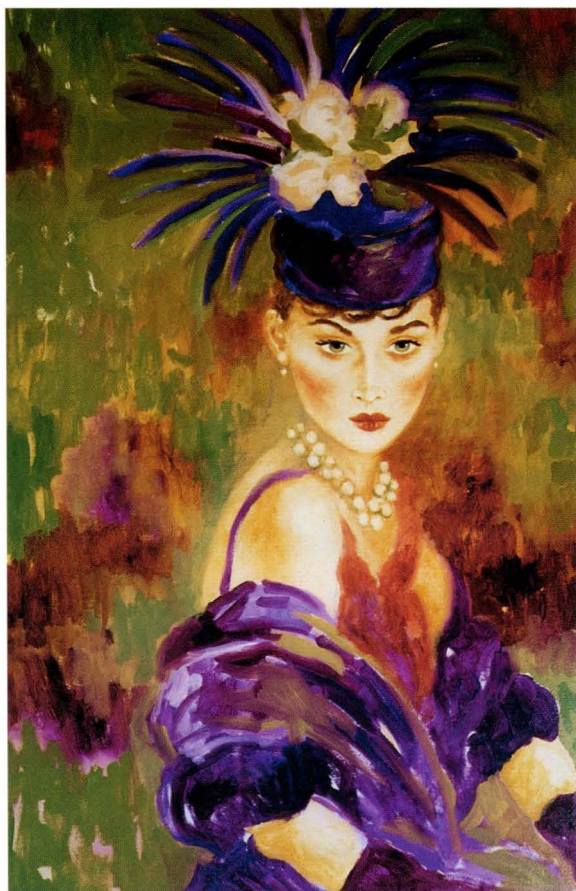
HAIGHT ASHBURY VF

Joanna Zjawinska



Joanna Zjawinska was born in Poland, when the country was still firmly locked behind the Iron Curtain. She grew up under the shadow of a repressive regime – remembering times when a knock on the door induced stark terror, the time her father was taken away by the security forces, the care one needed to take before speaking or acting on anything.

Joanna remembers that drawing and painting were play activities of her childhood, since toys and television sets were not around. Her parents regarded her artistic talents as incidental, and not to be taken seriously. The notion of pursuing a career as an artist was not one they seriously considered for her, and to please them Joanna decided to study architecture. She earned her B.A. in 1972 from the School of Architecture in Warsaw. But after



Amanda, original oil on canvas, 40" x 30"
image size.

New York, she met her husband, who moved back to Poland with her so she could finish her studies. After three years there, they returned to the United States, venturing west to San Francisco. There, they and their baby daughter lived hand-to-mouth in Haight Ashbury, getting by on food stamps as they struggled to prevail. Zjawinska recalls the day when their luck turned: "We were living in Haight Ashbury, close to Castro – it was a place

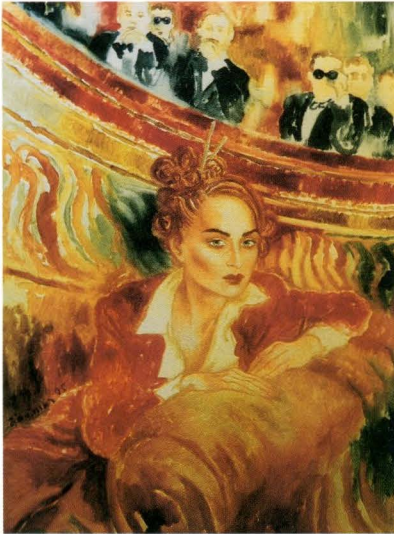
that, she decided to follow her own path, set down over the years in pencil, charcoal, and paint. She enrolled in the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, where she perfected her unique style of oil and watercolor painting. In 1978, she received her master of fine arts degree with honors from the academy.

In 1975 Zjawinska visited the United States.

While staying in



Cafe Luxembourg, original oil on museum board, 40" x 60" image size.



Why Don't You Take a Real Job, original oil on museum board, 40" x 60" image size.

full of hippies and beautiful old buildings. I had my portfolio and took it to Miller Gallery on Fisherman's Wharf. I showed the portfolio to the director, who told me to bring the paintings in. I brought some in – and they all sold that night! It was wonderful. We went out and bought food, a chair, and a television set.”

Zjawinska's unique personal vision and distinctive style quickly struck a chord among American connoisseurs and

collectors. Although she'd been making money as an artist since graduating from the academy in Warsaw, her experience at Miller Gallery marked the advent of serious critical commercial success.

Zjawinska and her husband bought a Victorian house in Haight Ashbury, where they set up both living and working quarters. Each has a studio on the premises – hers for painting, his for sculpture, which he both creates and teaches. Their daughter is attending Berkeley College, studying mass communications.

Every day, Zjawinska paints. “I listen to music, romantic music like Cesaria Evora, and I am in my pajamas or my sweat-pants, painting,” she says with a laugh. Part of her is thrilled with the American experience, and part of her misses Poland. “I did not want to leave. My mother and my sister are there, and I am very close to them,” she continues. “They’re my best friends. I visit several times a year. And things are different.”

“People, I think, don’t remember what it was like in Poland. Now there is freedom, and better times. I remember the first time I came to the United States, to New York. There was so much of everything! I went to Kings Plaza, in Brooklyn – not to buy, just to look and to touch. It was marvelous. Over time, I think I have become very American. But I love going to Poland, to see so many friends, and my family. It pulls you.”

Joanna Zjawinska is passionate about her work, her life, her family, her homeland, and her adopted home. Passion is the key to her art, and, in equal measure, her art has incited passion in the hearts of her viewing audience. Her life has been operatic in scope, just as her work is operatic in substance. She will continue to play her petite opera to the entire world, receiving thunderous applause.

About the Work . . .

Influences, Attitudes, and Style

In Joanna Zjawinska's works, hints of impressionism, expressionism, and art nouveau are evident within a style that is wholly her own. These influences, coupled with her love for the world of fashion design, color her work but do not define it.

As an individual who grew up under the Soviet regime, Zjawinska dealt with the harsh reality of living in a country disenfranchised from the Western world. Certain images, ideas, and expressions were considered

decadent, and were rejected out of hand. She was exposed in early childhood to copies of prewar *Vogue* magazines – left at the apartment she grew up in by long-gone tenants. The pictures within – glossy images of beauty and sophistication – influenced her art, for she was enchanted by the glamour regardless of its political incorrectness. Zjawinska strove to create beauty in face and form, in setting and costume, and this theme remains integral to her work.



Single Woman, original oil on linen,
30" x 24" image size.



Just for the Thrill of It, original oil on museum board, 36" x 36" image size.

Zjawinska's world is feminine, seductive in its restrained passion, rich in smoldering sensuality that needs only a small spark to burst into flame. "It is interesting," she observes, "that in some ways my women are reflections of myself. I spoke to a collector in a gallery one day, who told me, 'You know, in your earlier work your women looked more harsh, and so did you. Now, they look softer, and so, Joanna, do you!'" On the surface, Zjawinska's characters appear quiet, patient, and serene. But it is

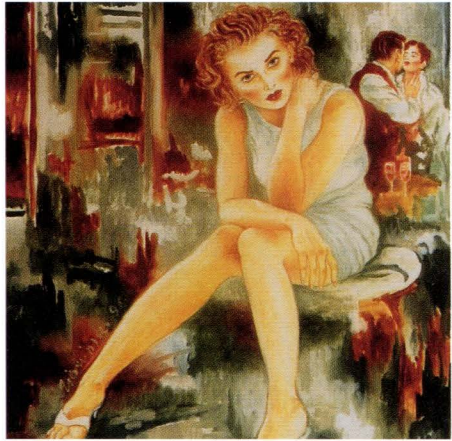


Princess Gloria, original oil on museum board, 48" x 60" image size.

the serenity of a jungle cat, whose still form belies a heated soul. There is a sense of a drama being enacted, and the viewer is drawn to speculate what the outcome will be. Tension and anticipation are key elements in Zjawinska's compelling art.

Equally key is the sense of theater with which Zjawinska imbues each image. There is, first, the glittering elegance of the worlds she creates. The people who move within the frame are monied, chic, beautiful, and dressed to the proverbial nines. It is a world of aristocratic souls, who may or may not give in to base instinct. Most of Zjawinska's lovely ladies are titian-haired, which, she admits, reflects a long-standing desire on her part to be a redhead.

Then, there is the voyeuristic aspect of her images. The viewer feels like an observer who happens upon a private scene and is privy to the secrets of those involved. Therein unfolds a story that is laid out to draw a wealth of responses. Such is the nature of opera, theater, and the cinema. The vision creates a sense of pleasure, because the viewer can divine the truth without worrying about the aftermath. Indeed, since Zjawinska offers considerable room for interpretation, the aftermath is actually determined by the viewer. And each successive viewing can alter the conclusion. One day, the woman who eyes a handsome man might move to meet him. The next day, upon re-examination, it might seem that she lets him pass by.



I'll be Around When She's Gone,
original oil on museum board, 48" x 48"
image size.

Joanna Zjawinska continues to look to colors, to fashion, and to music for inspiration. In every source, each steppingstone toward the next image, Zjawinska seeks and reveals passion. Sparked by her early exposure to glamour, and nursed by her fertile imagination and deft technique, the passions smolder through the picture plane, touch the viewer, and ignite a wild kaleidoscope of feelings. Zjawinska tends an eternal flame of passion – one of the fundamental fires of the heart – which she offers to kindle and share with art lovers the world over.

The Graphics

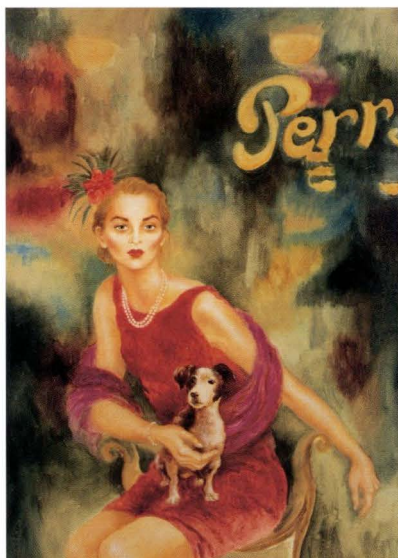


Above:

Objects of Desire, 1994 hand-signed serigraph on paper, 30" x 45.5" image size.

Right:

Mimi and Dog Alex, 1994 hand-signed serigraph on paper, 42" x 30" image size.





After All He's Just a Man, 1994 hand-signed serigraph on paper, 27.5" x 42" image size.



Above:

Odalisque, 1995 hand-signed serigraph on paper, 42" x 32" image size.

Right page top:

Nothing Is Ever What It Seems to Be, 1995 hand-signed serigraph on paper, 33" x 40" image size.

Right page bottom:

Ask Me – Would I Say Yes?, 1995 hand-signed serigraph on paper, 36" x 54" image size. Deluxe edition laid down on canvas.







Left page top:

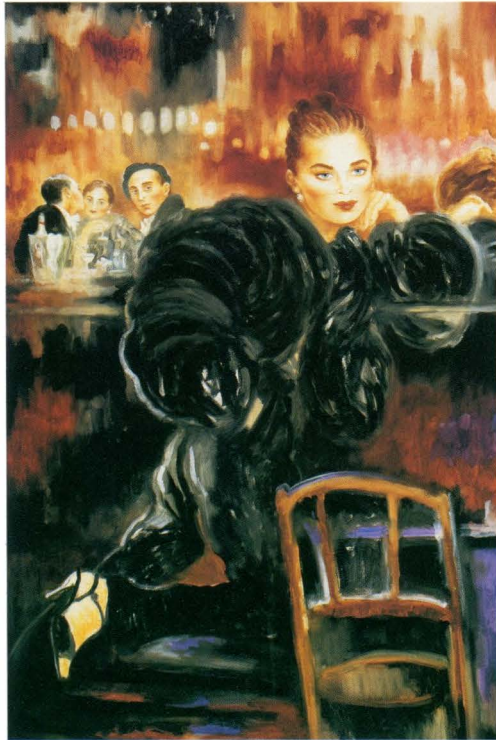
Love Has a Mind of Its Own, 1995 hand-signed serigraph on paper, 33" x 41" image size. Deluxe edition laid down on canvas.

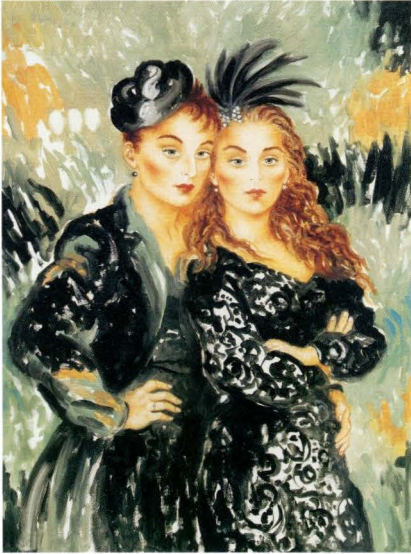
Left page bottom:

I Was Lost Until You Came, 1996 hand-signed serigraph on canvas, 33" x 41" image size.

Above:

Should I Surrender?, 1997 hand-signed serigraph on canvas, 36" x 36" image size.





Above:

Moulin Rouge Suite: 1998 hand-signed serigraphs on canvas, 40" x 30" image size for each panel. Left panel, *Lulu and Lili*; right panel, *Lola*.

Left page top:

Touch of an Angel, 1998 hand-signed serigraph on canvas, 30" x 41.5" image size.

Left page bottom:

Take a Walk on the Wild Side, 1998 hand-signed serigraph on canvas, 46" x 30.5" image size.

Solo Exhibitions

Since her arrival in the United States, Joanna Zjawinska has had numerous solo exhibitions in New York, Beverly Hills, New Orleans, San Francisco, Minneapolis, Carmel, La Jolla, and Sausalito.



Collections

Museum, Corporate, and Private



Zjawinska's work hangs in the Polish National Museum in Torun, Poland. Prestigious corporate collections include: MGM Grand, Las Vegas; Esprit, San Francisco; Warner/Vanderbilt, New York; Elizabeth Arden, San Francisco; Nordstrom, Inc., Seattle; and

Parfumerie Guerlain, Paris. Her extensive list of private collectors includes novelist Jackie Collins, actress Brooke Shields, actor Julian McMahon, and television personality Richard Simmons.

Above:

Don't Look at Me – I Have a Headache, original oil on museum board, 48" x 48" image size.

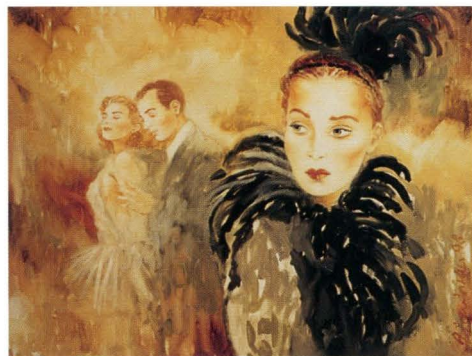
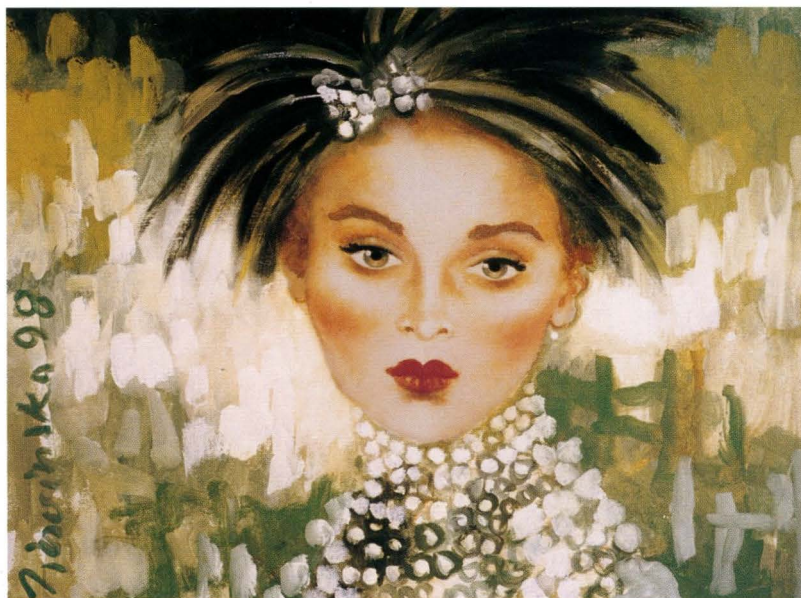
Right:

Crème de la Crème, original oil on canvas, 22" x 28" image size.



Joanna Zjawinska

Master of Mystery – Painter of Passion



Above:

Luna, original oil
on canvas, 16" x 20"
image size.

Left:

La Vie en Rose,
original oil on canvas,
30" x 40" image size.