

Marcia Burttt:

Breathing Room

By ERIN J. SMITH / CASA

WITH AN UNBRIDLED PASSION FOR WIDE OPEN SPACES, plein air artist Marcia Burttt's paintings celebrate the natural world at its most beautiful. "I'm a fanatic about being outside," she said. "Painting outdoors isn't work; painting indoors is."

Burttt's most recent work is on exhibit in her downtown studio gallery through December 28th. "I think when looking at an artist's work people get a very different impression of the person who created it," she said. "I'm very chaotic in my personal life, and you wouldn't think that from looking at my paintings. They have a calming effect." The exhibition represents works painted in



Broad Beach Reflections, 24x36 inches, acrylic by **Marcia Burttt**

the past year, including preparatory paintings created for commissions from hospitals. "Painting is my meditation, and it comes through in the work," she said. "There's a calm that comes from being outdoors for hours, with the air going through you."

As an undergraduate Burttt studied art and art history during her senior year, but knew from an early age that she would one day become a painter when she received a set of oil paints and an easel for her eleventh birthday. She holds a BA in psychology from UC Berkeley and an MA in art from the University of Montana.

Early in her career Burttt worked as a typesetter and layout artist for a printer, while continuing to paint in her free time. After doing some freelance work for United Way, she was offered a full time job. It was then that she made the decision to focus on her art work and turned down the opportunity. "If I had a real job from the beginning, I never would have become a full time painter," she said.



Photo by Bill Dewey

Marcia Burttt



Coastal Overlook, 35x139 inches, acrylic by **Marcia Burttt**

Burttt's paintings have been included in several museum exhibitions, such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. She is the recipient of many awards, including First Place in the San Luis Obispo Plein Air Festival and Artist's Choice in the Sedona plein air event.

Burttt's passion for the natural world extends to environmental preservation. She is a founding member of The Oak Group and of SCAPE (Southern California Artists Painting for the Environment). These groups have raised over a million dollars to preserve open spaces. She and her husband David Sowle live on a 1200-acre ranch on California's central coast.

Her favorite piece in the show is *Broad Beach Reflections* because of how the buildings are reflected in the wet sand. Burttt is endlessly fascinated by this visual effect: "There's a certain tidal situation, where the reflection can be very evocative, almost becoming an abstraction." As a plein air artist, Burttt works predominately on location. "Once I find a place, I take all the materials, sometimes walking for one to two miles before setting up," she described. "I take my shoes and socks off and wait for the tide to come in. Then I paint while it's wet. People from the neighbourhood watch me paint as they go by."

The Marcia Burttt Studio & Gallery is located at 517 Laguna St. and is open 11am-5pm Saturdays and Sundays. For more information, call 962-5588 or visit www.marciaburttt.com.