

Architectural Foundation

Michele Zuzalek: *The Art of Trees*

By ANDRIA WATSON / CASA

FASCINATED BY A MOSAIC WINTER SKY with twisting

tangled branches and tiles of light held firmly in color and silhouette, Michele Zuzalek's exhibit at the Architectural Foundation through February 29th, *The Art of Trees*, explores the humble strength and raw power of trees.



Michele Zuzalek

"I started drawing when I was six, and took up painting when I was eleven. When the art teacher would tell the students to put

the materials away, I wouldn't even hear because I was so involved with what I was working on," shared Zuzalek.

For the show, thirty paintings were created in one year by the Boston native. Inspiration came a couple years ago, when Zuzalek was undergoing chemotherapy, and put an exhibit together called *Branching Out*, which focused on observing the rooted strength in trees as a personal mantra for overcoming illness and retaining hope.

"Painting is my way of comprehending nature and the meaning of existence. By

creating new spaces, I can clarify and express my perception of the values and possibilities of life as a whole," Zuzalek explained.

A graduate of the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, she has studied painting privately with Jack Lynwood, Tom Wudl, Harry Carmean, L. Feitelson, and Leo Carrillo.

Besides painting, she established a graphic design business in 1993. Over the years Zuzalek made trips to Santa Barbara to visit her sister, Linda, and her brother, Richard, and eventually decided to make it her home as well. Currently, she has a growing client base and specializes in graphic design.

While friends and family influence and support Zuzalek's work, she also admires artists such as Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove,

Matisse, Richard Diebenkorn, Egon Sheille, Edward Hopper, and Paul Cezanne.

"I love seeing a blank canvas evolve and change with my vision," she shared. If marooned on an island, Zuzalek would only need three things: food, water, and plenty of art supplies. "I would be gratified

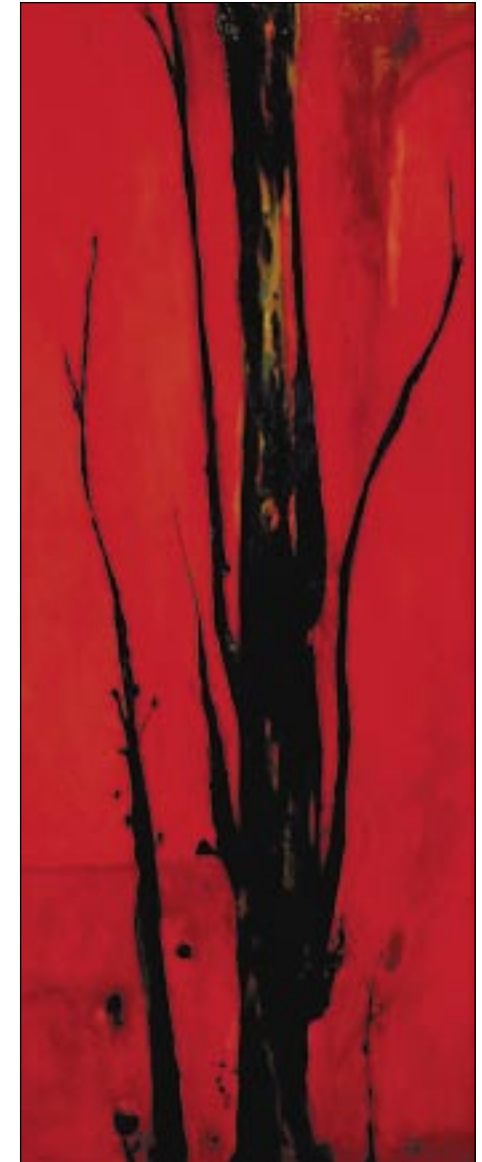
by nothing more than to continue making art and strive to achieve nothing less," Zuzalek shared.

Her advice for struggling and aspiring artists is to start out small or large, sketching personal images or memories of life experiences. "Whether the thoughts are good or bad, get them on paper. Express your feelings, they become art."

The Architectural Foundation is located at 229 E. Victoria St, and is open Mon through Thu, from 9 to 2pm. For information, call 965-6307.



Evening Whispers, 18x24 oil, by Michele Zuzalek



Cinnabar, oil, by Michele Zuzalek