



*Stillness at the Pantheon*, 30"x40" by **Elisse Pogofsky-Harris**

Monlleo Gallery

## Dreaming of Italy

By **Kerry Methner** / CASA

**WHEN DREAMS OF ITALY EMERGED IN THE NIGHTTIME REVERIES** of life-long painter Elisse Pogofsky-Harris, they also began to appear on the canvases and in the monotypes she creates daily. Some of those paintings and monotypes are one view at Monlleo Gallery in an exhibit titled *Italian Dreams* through December 31st.

"The first time I went to Italy I fell in love with it," shared Pogofsky-Harris. "I knew it was my home, so I made a life that took me there."

In all she lived in Italy for eleven years, before she came back to live in the States. But she continued to travel back and forth. "I had a farm house in Tuscany for 34 years. At one point it needed a tremendous amount of repair that I couldn't afford, so we sold it," she explained.



**Elisse Pogofsky-Harris**

Enter the dreams of Italy. "I missed Italy," she shared. Eventually, in addition to numerous paintings reflecting her connection to the boot shaped country, Pogofsky-Harris found an apartment in Todi in

Umbria, Italy, to call her own.

But living through this process of back and forth was a psychologically charged experience for her - with the symbol of Rome also coming to populate her canvases - the wolf. "Wolves are a very famous image in Rome - due to Romulus and Remus [founders of Rome] being suckled by a wolf," she noted. "The female wolf is a symbol of Rome."

These wolves on canvas are usually not very large compared to the entire frame, but are never-the-less powerful figures.

"I had been doing wolves for a long time, maybe 15 years ago. I did a whole series of wolves and kimonos. Then I stopped doing the wolves. But they started appearing again on their own. The painting would finish itself with a wolf," Pogofsky-Harris noted.

About the same time, Pogofsky-Harris's travels took her to Scotland where she discovered spring lambs. "There are sheep everywhere in Scotland," she shared. "They

are cute. When we arrived, they had just been born. I thought 'Why not use sheep?' Then I realized that sheep and wolves go together, with the shepherd. Sheep are often used in religious paintings."

So in Pogofsky-Harris's dreamscapes of Italy, the wolves of Rome stand with and among sheep - in a kind of surreal spiritual landscape of peace over predatory relationship.

Pogofsky-Harris discovered her life-long artistic occupation when she was home from school for a month or two in elementary school in Chicago. "I had mono and I started to draw and paint and I never stopped," the artist recalled. In junior high, her art teacher got her a scholarship to the Chicago Art Institute where she took classes and took in the wonderful art.

In high school she was able to continue taking art classes with hip instructors. She also danced. While her family were not artists themselves, they were very supportive of her, and she was able to continue on to the University of Michigan where she chose a degree in art over one in dance.

Now Pogofsky-Harris is starting on a new series and the exhibit reflects this. The range goes from one of her earliest dream paintings of the Pantheon (above) to a small series of new work - images of ravens in (both paintings and monotype prints) and as well as some other flocks of smaller birds. "I've been painting birds," the artist explained simply.

Monlleo Gallery will be open for a Roman Holiday event with the artist on Friday, December 16th from 5 to 8pm. All are welcome but participants must wear black and white. The Gallery is located at 327-A Salinas St and is open Wed to Sun, 12-3pm. Reach them at 845-9920.



*Piazzale Michelangelo*, 30"x40" by **Elisse Pogofsky-Harris**