

Carol Doyle 1985

I was born in West Virginia and lived in Ohio until my marriage in 1968, when I moved to California. One of my early childhood pleasures was spending time in my grandmother's garden, and today I feel more at home in a garden than anywhere. I began to use garden imagery in my work in 1975 and in 1977, after a visit to England, I became more interested in formal gardens and the role of statuary and ornament in the garden's meaning. Gardens have provided me an endlessly rich source of imagery and I am returning to England this year to see more.

I started painting the smoking monkey as a still life object in 1983. In that it is odd and mysterious and man-made, it is related to what attracts me in garden ornaments. From the beginning the smoking monkey was juxtaposed with garden imagery, but finally it seemed to take possession of the garden.

I am generally pretty analytical when looking at art, but in the studio I depend heavily on instinct. Paintings are often slow in coming. For instance, I might see something that inspires a painting--I'll know that eventually I'll have a painting from it--but I'll have to wait, sometimes months, til it's clear how to begin. Often the way to proceed is revealed to me through work on another painting. Once my idea is formed, I know what size and shape the canvas must be and I can get started. It rarely works out for me to stretch a random size canvas and then fit an image to it. Once the scale is set, I feel a sense of freedom and I manipulate the image freely until I get the feeling of the original idea. 'Black Garden' and 'Inheritance' are two examples of paintings that developed very slowly from the original inspiration to the final work. To me the most beautiful paintings are those in which some discovery is made and the "record" of that discovery is visible in the paint.

In 1980 in an effort to avoid local color, I began establishing the structure of my paintings in values, and then breaking up the dark and light areas with color strokes. This was a fruitful period. It gave me a new freedom in my use of color. Finally I became frustrated that my method didn't allow me to draw with the paint, and I abandoned that way of working for one that is less restricting.

My influences have been wide ranging, but my favorite paintings are 20th Century French, especially Matisse. Of contemporary painters I most admire Susan Rothenberg.