

ROSEMARY KIMBAL



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Mindful Movement

BY KIMBERLY JONES

ROSEMARY KIMBAL’S artistic approach took root in 1971, when she learned how to meditate at the Tassajara Zen Mountain Center in Central California. A few years later, she took her first class in brush painting (the ink-wash technique used in Asian calligraphy). She spent the next several years mastering the style from such notable Zen artists as Kazuaki Tanahashi and Jean Shen. In 1984, she became enamored with tai chi, which inspired the blending of art and movement.

Rosemary takes advantage of the preparation of materials to focus her energy.

“The act of grinding ink and water for paint is a Zen activity,” she says. “While you’re doing it, you can’t think about anything else.”

She keeps at her disposal a selection of brush sizes. When working with one 3 feet long, she’ll often spend time beforehand in slow, rhythmic movement — a dance of sorts — with the brush. When she feels the time is right, she will begin to paint, using what she calls her “stroke in a breath” technique, in which she puts paint on her brush, poises to take a stroke, inhales deeply and then paints on the exhale. In this way, she allows the brush to guide her hand and the breath to power the movement.

“When I paint an abstraction, I will allow the brush to do its thing and then decide afterward what the image might actually be and which direction I will go with it,” she says.

Rosemary spends hours every day in her studio across the lawn from her Encinitas home, allowing nothing more than the occasional background music of a solo piano or Japanese bamboo flute into her consciousness. She signs paintings with the symbol of her Asian name, which means “beautiful joy,” as well as the name of her studio: Dancing Brush Studio. Sometimes she includes a mood seal for “prosperity” or “dream journey,” as well as a brief inspirational poem.

Her work — which includes paintings on rice paper, canvas, silk, tile, ceramics and tile-mosaic murals — is in nearly 700 private collections. In 1995, she completed two large paintings for the lobby of Scripps Memorial Hospital in Encinitas.

When not painting her own work, she engages in her other passion: teaching. For more than 30 years, she has guided thousands of executives, senior citizens and even elementary school students in the art of Zen.

“I try to impress upon my students that painting is a form of meditation available to anyone,” she says.



Clockwise from top left: *Goddess*, sumi on rice paper, 29 x 38 inches; *Dragon Power*, Japanese watercolor on rice paper, 35 x 63 inches; and poster of *The Dancer*, sumi on rice paper, 32 x 58 inches