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# A Window into Lisa Lala's World

View Lisa Lala's landscape and still life paintings and it's easy to see why this emerging artist is attracting a loyal fan base, with sold-out shows and commissions through the next six months. The work is lyrical and joyful—much like the artist herself—taking inspiration from impressionists, post-impressionists and expressionists. Graceful shapes of poppies, trees and birds alight her paintings, which are pretty without being cloying or trite. The paint is thick enough to create shadows on her canvas.

Yet come closer and you'll see she paints on glass rather than stretched fabric, a technique that dates back centuries; glass fragments decorated with gold have been found embedded in Roman tombs. Twentieth century artists including Wassily Kandinsky, Jackson Pollock, Pablo Picasso and Paul Klee were glass-painters as well; but Lala makes it her own. "I love painting on the slick surface," she says. "And I don't cover the glass totally; little portions of glass sparkle in the light. I also use the back of my brush to etch or draw lines in the paint, and they glint when you pass by."

Lala's own history is filled with art. Her parents are sculptor Wil Lala and watercolor painter Susan Lala. Growing up in Manhattan, Kansas, the youngster was raised with a global perspective, as her father often took his family to impoverished countries to work as medical volunteers. She'll team up with her father for a dual show at the Strecker-Nelson Gallery in Manhattan in June.

Lala has studied under Philomene Bennett (our 100+10 subject this month; see page 22) and has also painted with Lisa Grossman, Jane Booth and Bev Gegan, who have all influenced her work.

Since becoming a full-time painter in 2003, Lala has had five sell-out shows including the Plaza Art Fair and a solo exhibition at Blue Gallery



PHOTO BY BETH ALLISON WICKERSON



in February, which sold out in three days. The gallery's co-owner, Kelly Kuhn, describes Lala's work this way: "Lisa's paintings engage you from a distance with her color and subject matter. But she continues to hold your attention with her incredible mark-making and pattern that lies within the surface of the paint. Her work is relaxed and complex at once. Her collectors are ravenous for her work because she

feeds a need that has been missing in art for a while—to relate with a work of art and, at the same time, see something unexpected."

One thing you *can* expect is remarkable things from this young Kansas City talent. ■

BY KATIE VAN LUCHENE PORTRAIT BY RACHAEL JANE

ABOVE: It's clear that Lisa Lala is an artist with a bright future. She has sold out five shows and has enough commissions to stay busy for months.