

# STYLE

COVERING THE ARTS AND LOCAL FEATURES



Photograph by George Sakkestad

Saratoga artist Chi Yu stands in front of one of her paintings. Yu says she paints the things in her life: 'I paint what I see, what I feel. I always do that.'

## Yu's experiences come alive in paintings

### Saratoga artist paints 'her life'

By HEATHER ZIMMERMAN

Some people say that the devil is in the details, but Saratoga artist Chi Yu knows better: It's beauty that is in the details, she says. Her paintings portray a variety of subjects in vivid colors and careful detail. The ability to capture the inner points of a subject is what drew Yu as an artist to the realist style, but painting and the arts in general have long been part of her life.

Yu was born in China and grew up in Taiwan. She and her husband

moved to the United States in 1974. After about 14 years in Texas, the Yu family came to Saratoga, where they have lived for about 20 years. Yu has been painting in oils for nearly as long.

During a year when the family returned to Taiwan, Yu began learning Chinese brush painting, but upon returning to Texas, she found it difficult to locate an instructor in brush painting, so she stopped working in that medium.

Moving to Saratoga, Yu notes, gave her more choices, artistically speaking, and among those she chose oil painting. "I wanted to try something new," Yu says. "Since I tried it, I love it more and more." Yu has been working as an oil painter for about 20 years. Painting was a

medium that allowed her flexibility when she was a stay-at-home mother, and since her children are now grown, Yu says she finds greater time to pursue her art.

"I'm doing more paintings, and they're getting bigger and bigger," Yu says, noting that she always makes a point of seeking out a subject that she knows will challenge her.

"Sometimes in the studio, they say, 'Why do you always choose the difficult subjects?' I just love it. To me, it is beauty."

During the two decades as a painter, Yu has studied with Stefan Baumann, a painter who is also known for his television show *The Grand View*, which offers an artist's view of America's national parks. Yu credits Baumann's

encouragement and support, as well as his understanding of Chinese culture, in helping her hone her skills as a painter.

Many rooms in Yu's Saratoga home display her colorful oil paintings. Collectively, they demonstrate that Yu's inspiration comes to her in a variety of forms, from flowers and landscapes to architecture and people. Her works also reflect her affinity for the performing arts. Yu herself has studied Chinese dance for 14 years, and she has painted works that show Chinese musicians and dancers, ballerinas, pianists and other artists performing.

Some of her paintings depict

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scenes that were inspired by newspaper or magazine photos, while many other paintings capture places in Europe and Asia where Yu and her husband have traveled. Yu often accompanies her husband on business trips, and she says she jokes with him, "You haven't wasted a penny on my traveling expenses. I always do something and maybe earn it back."

Yu takes photos of places that appeal to her and paints them when she returns home. Next year, she says, viewers will see scenes from her recent trip to Australia, New Zealand and Taiwan.

Often Yu will take some artistic license with her subject, moving the placement of a statue, for example, or even changing the direction of a river, to create a more pleasing com-

position. Some commonly painted locales, like the Grand Canyon, she'll depict at dusk or nighttime, which isn't seen as often and adds to the challenge of creating the piece.

Ultimately, Yu says, she paints her life. "I paint what I see, what I feel. I always do that."

Yu says she prefers not to regularly exhibit at galleries and she no longer paints on commission, but she does occasionally hold an exhibition of her paintings, and she paints 12 pieces each year for a calendar for her brother's business in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

Yu has published two books of her art. The most recent book, *Lifeworks*, featuring about 100 of Yu's paintings, was released to coincide with a retrospective exhibition of her works in fall 2008. After the show, Yu donated partial proceeds from painting and book sales to charity.

*For more information about Chi Yu, visit [chiyuart.com](http://chiyuart.com).*