

## An Artistic View of Reality

By Allison Plitt



*Elinore Schnurr's painting "Times Square Reflected" comments on the media intrusion into all aspects of life. Photo courtesy of Elinore Schnurr*

Elinore Schnurr refers to herself as “a contemporary representational painter” who paints real scenes of people living in the everyday world. Viewing herself as a subjective painter, Little Neck resident Schnurr has painted six different series of paintings throughout her career that not only imply her feelings toward her subjects but exhibit her development as an artist as she adds more complex elements into her paintings.

Growing up in a small town in Ohio, Schnurr attended the Cleveland Institute of Art. After graduation she traveled throughout Europe where she studied art in the great museums. When she returned to the United States in 1960, she settled in New York City, where she was able to start her career as a painter.

When Schnurr first moved to the city, she sketched people walking around the Wall Street area with the buildings’ stone facades behind them. While she was fascinated by her new environment, she drew hollow,

empty figures passing each other anonymously in the streets in reaction to the feelings of emptiness she felt as a newcomer in a city with which she was unfamiliar. Her works from this period are now in public collections in the Cleveland Museum in Ohio and the Smithsonian Museum of Art in Washington, D.C.

Living near Columbia University during the 1960s and '70s, Schnurr found herself surrounded by the violence in her neighborhood when students were protesting the Vietnam War. Although her experiences on these streets were chaotic, she personally protested by exploring Zen and Eastern philosophy, which helped to change her painting style. Schnurr revealed, "The solid or hollow, formerly empty figures became transparent; I painted figures that one could walk through: formless form, colorless color; a counter-culture response to the chaos surrounding me."

In the '80s, Schnurr created a collection of paintings called "The World Trade Center Series." Between 1984 and 1989, Schnurr took black and white photos and drew people in the lobby of Tower II. To imitate the shafts of sunlight cascading into the lobby in which her subjects seemed to disappear, she painted many of these scenes with gouache, which she created by grinding chalk into watercolor, and according to Schnurr, "allowed color, light and shadow to occur in a spontaneous way."

As Schnurr matured as a painter, she described her palette as "becoming richer and darker in color and tone." In response to the way that light was beginning to overshadow her figures, she explored darker spaces such as hotel lobbies, cafes and bars which led to her ongoing work called "Interior Series."

Now immersing herself among the figures who were communicating and interacting with each other, Schnurr painted on location with her pochade box, a small paint box with a sketch board. Feeling more like a participant than an observer in her environment, she painted her figures with more detail, used darker color tone and kept a lighter psychological tone.

Deciding to add a new perspective to her drawings, Schnurr created another group of paintings called "The Outside Looking In Series." Using reflections so that they are broken apart by media, space and light, she said, "I am working with images that I see as I pass by bars and cafes with glass windows that reflect the images of the street, intermixing them with the images of the people inside and the interior spaces."

For example, when a reflection of a media image from an electronic billboard at Times Square mixes in with a bar scene, Schnurr is implying the intrusion of the media in our own relationships and interconnectedness.

In her current series of paintings, Schnurr creates works that attempt to express the duality of the human mind. For example, she paints a person sipping a glass of wine in a bar with a friend while her thoughts of a recent terrorist attack manifest itself in a picture above her head of men violently fighting with guns. Aptly titling these pieces as "In Our Mind's Eye Series," Schnurr again places various window reflections on top of her interior scenes. The vivid color and texture and intricate scene composition that create each painting invoke the complexity of the times we are living in.

*For more information about Schnurr and her paintings, you can visit her website at [elinoreschnurr.com](http://elinoreschnurr.com). She can be contacted by email at [info@elinoreschnurr.com](mailto:info@elinoreschnurr.com).*



*Little Neck artist Elinore Schnurr, shown in her studio, calls herself 'a contemporary representational painter.' Photo courtesy of Allison Plitt.*



*Elinore Schnurr says her paintings, like this one called "In Our Mind's Eye," are of real people in the everyday world. Photo courtesy of Elinore Schnurr.*