

Voices of the Hut

小亭發聲

ART OF THE MONTH

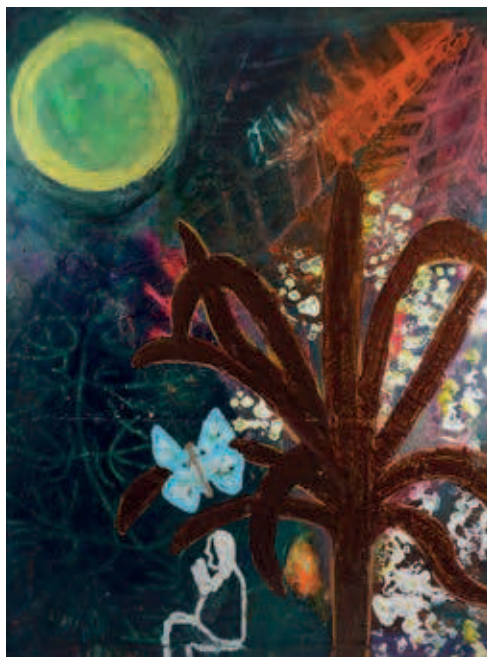
本月藝術

茶人: *Lee Ann Hilbrich*

Since December, Lee Ann has been writing about and painting her impressions of each and every Tea of the Month. We find it so inspiring that our envelopes are behind such creativity each month, and wonder how many of you are also using the crests of these monthly waves to go from the bowl to some kind of artwork!

October 2016: Elevation, Red Tea (活力舒醒)

This was the tea I received in my very first Global Tea Hut shipment. I feel very blessed that this was my starting tea. Since I felt like I was learning a new language and just becoming awake to the way of Tea, reading that I could put the leaves in a bowl to brew and drink was just what I needed. Serendipitously, I had just made a bowl at my first-ever pottery wheel class, something I had always wanted to try. It was harder than I thought and the bowl was a weird size and I almost got rid of it as I had no clue what I would use it for until I discovered bowl tea. Experiencing the tea in that handmade bowl, and reading through the high-quality “Tea & Tao Magazine,” full of poems, artful images and inspiring new ways to think about elevating tea, I was captivated. I never meant to start creating art to go along with the tea each month; it’s just that I was so inspired by the tea itself and the amazing articles and photography in the magazine. I cut out and saved, for later art and inspiration, a few pictures from the magazine that spoke to me—the woman sitting beneath the tea tree and the picture of the butterfly as part of the Chaxi. I was about to begin a painting one day, and those pictures called to me. I ended up creating a painting that was inspired by the pictures, as well as my experience of the tea Herself, that I have seen bloom and unfold under my very eyes in my bowl. I love that the tea leaves took on a life of their own in the painting, stretching out, sheltering, providing. And I love that the woman is before such an expansive, alive tea tree. There is so much she doesn’t know, and she is entering a new magical world. The butterfly—a symbol of transformation, and a personally meaningful symbol to me—tells me I have discovered the right path that will help me spread my wings. Truly, I feel that this tea, so aptly named, has elevated me, and started me on an exciting adventure with Tea. The painting ended up being so meaningful and meditative to me, and helped me truly capture what I learned and experienced from the tea and magazine just became part of my monthly shipment experience.



November 2016: Calm Fragrance, Mi Xiang Oolong

I think because incense came with this tea, it turned into a very tactile and sensual painting experience for me. I used the incense and drank the tea while painting, so both the incense smoke and the tea steam have literally covered this painting. I also christened this piece by rubbing the brewed tea leaves on it, and at the bottom, you can still see some of the original tea paint. For good measure, I added in some of the ash and unbrewed tea as well to the painting. I was so intrigued by this specific tea and how the bugs biting it made the honey fragrance possible. That really spoke to me and, if you look closely, you may see a bug camouflaged as a leaf. The aloeswood incense has a big presence in this piece. I loved learning about the interesting and varied ways it can be produced, and all the unique ways it is categorized by shape, location and quality. Since honey fragrance was associated with both the tea and the incense, I tied the leaf and resin images together by making a honey-colored paint (and mixing in some gold leaf, inspired by the incense balls featured in the magazine) and dripping it from the top of the painting. There is also a honeycomb design layer that is behind both depicted images.



以香入定

December 2016: Beneath the Pines, Liu Bao Black Tea (松下)

I was so captivated by the legend of the origin of Liu Bao Tea and I knew immediately I wanted to illustrate that story in my painting. The story of the multi-colored cliffs where the fairies planted the tea seeds and the dog guarded them, and of how the cliffs turned black over time as two majestic, special tea trees grew from the seeds, enchanted and called to me. My favorite part of the story was how the cliffs were once so colorful but then turned black. I used a previous painting as my canvas and it was perfect to help create the colorful hidden magic of the black cliffs by etching. The flowers were already on my canvas, which I thought was serendipitous, as the “golden flowers,” or mold spores, are sometimes associated with this tea. I hope as you look at this painting, you remember your childhood innocence and remember that magic and fairies abound. I hope it inspires you to see the color and beauty in everything. I will never drink Liu Bao, or any black tea again, without thinking of this painting and the majestic tea trees on top of the magical black cliffs that are worth scaling for some wonderful tea. Sometimes things may appear ordinary when they are truly extraordinary.



January 2017: Old-Town Gathering, Shou Puerh (老城聚集)

It wasn't until my shipment tin was almost gone that I started painting. I started painting first with the tea Herself, then with the Lei Cha, and then with acrylic paints, inks and oil pastels. As I started finger painting with brewed leaves across the canvas, I almost wanted to leave the painting simply with just the design the tea had made on the canvas, but I'm not that brave yet. I was also very inspired after learning about the Hakka people and their tradition of serving Lei Cha. This tea felt like that warm welcome I would receive from them as a guest. So I added some Lei Cha to the canvas and then started using my non-tea paints. As I painted with those, I was trying to appreciate what was my final brewing session with Old-Town Gathering, and because I had enjoyed so much of Her before starting painting, I realized that appreciating the qualities of Her in the painting was what I wanted to create on the canvas. So I focused on capturing Her flavor, thickness, smoothness, mellowness, *huigan* and Qi. And I left space for Her to speak for Herself in the middle. I feel that there is almost a painting within a painting. I made a painting, but Old-Town Gathering and Lei Cha did as well, and together we created, hopefully, a magical experience. There are so many layers to our lives, to our experiences, and I want to appreciate and trust each one, knowing we are all built by our connections and dependence upon others. I want to be as generous and hospitable, as warm and welcoming, as both of these lovely teas. I hope as you enter into the magic of this painting, that you truly enter and experience each layer and listen to what it has to speak to your soul and spirit.



精神紅茶



February 2017: Vitality, Dian Hong Red Tea

This piece is entitled "VitaliTea." As February's "Tea and Tao Magazine" was all about tea and meditation, this piece is meant to allow you to meditate on the actual tea leaves and sink deeply into Her rich red tea liquor. I wet the aquaboard canvas with the tea liquor, used gel medium to apply the tea leaves loosely in the center, and then dropped acrylic ink, fluid acrylic paint, ink sprays and rubbing alcohol onto the canvas and tea leaves, and just allowed the piece to take the form she desired. As you allow yourself to enter into the art, listen to what VitaliTea has to say to your heart today. Allow yourself to experience her deep revitalizing powers. What medicine can you receive from her today that you can lovingly apply where you need it? What messages of strength do you experience as you meditate on the love and life she offers you?

March 2017: Golden Thread, Liu An Black Tea

I did a Facebook live video of me opening this month's tea shipment, so I wanted a picture of the brewed tea to also share online. I was drinking Golden Thread in bed one morning, and I asked my husband to take my tea cup and get a good picture of it. He decided to take the cup outside and set it on the edge of our raised garden bed, which was full of overgrown weeds and plants. He brought the picture back to show me and I was in awe—there were dewdrops on the greenery in the garden and I immediately thought of how Golden Thread is so intentionally crafted to take in the magical “white dew” during the largest Harvest Moon. The making of this tea was so inspiring to me—it felt like the leaves were a kind of painting in and of themselves, with the farmers, the artists, using Nature Herself as their medium. I knew immediately I wanted to paint the picture he had taken. The idea came to me to use masking fluid so I could paint the picture, and then rub off the dried mask afterwards to reveal, like magic, white dewdrops.

金寶藏六安



神聖綻放

April 2017: Heavenly Blossom, Green Tea & Tea Blossoms

I love the simplicity of bowl tea, and any opportunity to get to use the ceramic bowl I handmade. I was excited to spend time with Heavenly Blossom and was stunned at how many blossoms there were and how delicately they unfolded when brewed. This tea was such a feast for the eyes that I wanted the painting to capture Her beautiful display. I used an aquaboard, which is a canvas that you wet first, and simply added color with water-soluble crayons. The blossoms were so special that I decided I didn't even want to attempt to paint them, and instead, allowed this painting to have a collage element with the photographed flowers. I ended up giving away most of this heavenly tea to a friend for her birthday. My friend loves green tea and truly appreciates the simple joys of life, and the delicate blossoms reminded me so much of the light and beauty she brings to my life and to the world.

