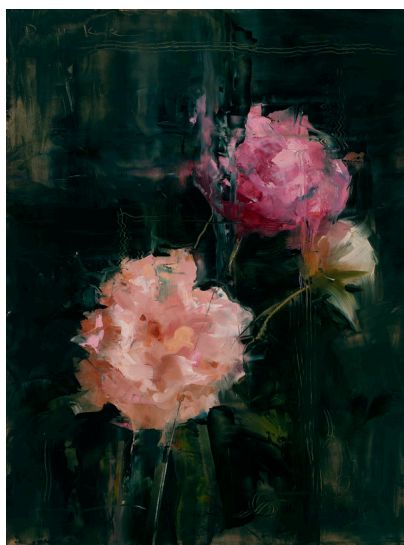


## Celebration of Fine Art Artist Spotlight: Leslie Duke

Written by Christina Silvestri

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[Leslie Duke's](#) love of art as a child was foreshadowing to her future career as a celebrated fine artist.



When Leslie was growing up, she analyzed artwork in the children's books her parents read to her. All through her teen years, she took watercolor lessons from fellow Utah artist [Harold Petersen](#). And while she always knew art would be a big part of her life, she never thought of painting as a career. Instead Leslie focused her efforts on earning a degree in illustration.

"My plan was to become a freelance illustrator for books, magazines and ads," Duke said. "I worked as an illustrator for a few years after graduating but didn't love it and I really missed painting."

Feeling the time was right to explore a future in fine art, she apprenticed under [William Whitaker](#), a Utah-based artist known for his portrait work. She felt inspired with the paintbrush back in her hand so she challenged herself to paint one 5"x 7" oil still life every day for 30 days. During that time she experimented with how various paints appeared on canvas, and explored how they looked hanging on a wall versus in print or on a screen.

"At the end of those 30 days, I felt I had just reached the tip of the iceberg of what you can do with still life," Duke said. "I fell in love with it and it's what I've been exploring since."

Leslie's expertise in color psychology and texture are immediately apparent in her works. Her paintings are minimalistic, yet capture a dreaminess about them. Her use of color adds both soothing tones and pops of energy that stop visitors in their tracks.

"I like to give them a new life, to show that there is beauty in something that is seemingly so simple," Leslie said. "Each color palette may mean something different to me than someone viewing my work. It is just playing that game and allowing the painting to become something as I go along and as the colors develop."

In her second year at the Celebration of Fine Art, Duke says she's already seen her work take a leap from the year before, especially in technique and composition.

"It's really valuable to see other people's reactions to your artwork and see what they gravitate to," Duke said. "I've made a lot of good friends. It's like summer art camp because you're around so many different styles!"

Meet Duke and get to know other artists at the Celebration of Fine Art now through Sunday, March 26th. The show is open daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tickets are \$10 for adults and \$8 for seniors and military members, while children under 12 are free. For show details and information on participating artists, visit [www.celebrateart.com](http://www.celebrateart.com).