

BARBARA ROGERS

IN 1982, BARBARA ROGERS took a trip to Hawaii that turned out to be an artistic epiphany. While she was there, a hurricane swept through the island, and the artist was trapped in a small village, not sure if she would make it out alive. Eventually, Rogers was rescued, but it was a turning point in her work. Prior to the experience she painted figures, often wearing exotic clothes, in tropical jungles as if they were at a garden party. "I was always looking for very unusual-looking people with great wardrobes," she jokes. But after witnessing the aftermath of the hurricane, she became intrigued with the debris that blanketed the island. "That was the beginning of where I am today," she says.

Vegetation still plays an important role in Rogers' work, but the figures have vanished. She prefers to focus on moody lighting or interesting subject matter such as delicate orchids. Her landscapes are tropical but also depict desert plants such as the prickly pear cactus, which reflects her life in Arizona where Rogers has lived for more than a decade. Her lush, layered, tropical and desert landscapes are both sensuous and beautiful—two qualities that she strives to convey to her viewers.

It comes as no surprise that her inspiration comes from nature, including her garden filled with cacti and other vegetation. In fact, gardens, in a sense, are her visual metaphors for life. "The life-and-death cycle of the plant world is so much like our life cycle," she explains. "You see something as a little bud and watch it grow into maturity. It's helping me age. There is such incredible beauty in plant forms in the final weeks of life."

Critics have compared the artist's work with that of 16th-century Dutch painter Hieronymus Bosch, an assessment that Rogers understands. "Bosch had elements of the grotesque, which set off the beauty," she says. "I, too, believe you can't have one without the other." Rogers is represented by Chiaroscuro, Scottsdale, AZ, and Santa Fe, NM; Trinity Gallery, Atlanta, GA; and Fresh Paint Art Advisors Inc., Culver City, CA. □

Bonnie Gangelhoff is the senior editor of *Southwest Art*.



MOON GARDEN #4, OIL, 30 X 24.

90 A Contemporary Eye

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