

Jean Purnell / Artist Statement and Bio

The beauty of nature creates endless inspiration for my work. I try to capture the essence of something beautiful on the canvas and to convey the refreshing sense of being outdoors. Walking has been a way of staying sane since the pandemic years, and I feel lucky to have such beautiful surroundings in Benicia and our regional parks. Regional travel has become a way of exploring new landscapes while making new friends. I've been painting for seven years, and my style continues to evolve. I am continuing to explore color and a painterly, more abstract feel in my work.

I grew up in Bethesda, Maryland, and did college study on the East Coast. A career as music librarian brought me to University of the Pacific, in Stockton, where I had a 30-year rewarding career as teacher, librarian, and administrator. I enjoyed collecting the artwork of California's central valley painters, before moving to Benicia in 2013.

I became a regular visitor to Benicia's galleries and joined Arts Benicia in 2017. Through these connections I have met dozens of amazing and talented artists. This friendly and supportive artist community has been the reason for my development as an artist, for which I'm very grateful.

People describe my work as soft and restful. I begin by trying to capture what I see, but I get to a point where it feels more about brushstrokes and color. The painting seems to develop itself and I simply try to figure out when to stop. I paint mainly in oils and enjoy hand building with ceramics, while always open to exploring other mediums. I also enjoy writing about art, which is really writing about the people who create art and live fascinating lives.

I live in the Benicia Arsenal area and enjoy walking to First Street and back.

Website: jeanpurnellart.com

Instagram: @jeanpurnellart

Gallery Affiliations

Gallery 621

Benicia Plein Air Gallery

Exhibitions

Sense of Renewal, Gallery 621, Featured artist with Angela White, March 2025

Arts Benicia Presents at Happy Life Pottery, November 2024 – February 2025

The Scenic Route, California Impressions, Gallery 621, Featured artist with Robert Anke, July 2024

Arts Benicia Presents at Benicia City Council Chambers, with Pat Newell, May 2024

Good Company, Gallery 621, Featured Artist with Pam Dixon, November 2023

Sense of Place, Marilyn Citron O'Rourke Gallery, Benicia Public Library, with Angela White, August 2023

Plenty to Talk About, Gallery 621, Featured Artist with Pam Dixon, September 2022

Pure Paint, Arts Benicia, Nicholas Wilton, Juror. 2021

Microcosmos II, Gallery 621, Chester Arnold, Juror. 2019

Uplift, Celebrating the Sierra Nevada, Arts Benicia, Jeanne Lorenz, Juror. 2019

Art of a Community, Arts Benicia. 2019-2025

Education

BA, Wake Forest University. Major: Music, Biology. Summa Cum Laude, Phi Beta Kappa

MA, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Musicology.

MSLS. University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Library Science.

Ed.D. University of the Pacific. Educational Administration and Leadership.

Career

Music Librarian, University of North Carolina, Greensboro. 1980-84

Dean of Libraries, Associate Provost, Executive Assistant to the President, Associate Vice President for Development. University of the Pacific 1984-2013

Development Manager, Arts Benicia. 2017-