

# BARBARAKEMPCOWLIN

PO Box 5381 | Oracle, AZ 85623 | Phone: 520.896.2824 | Email: barbara@barbaracowlin.com

## Artist Statement

I'm a contrarian, I love contradictions and contrasts. I'm left-handed and I tend to approach life and art in my own left-handed way. This means that I'm out-of-sync with the art world most of the time. That is certainly the case now.

While the rest of the art world is involved in wrapping art into social issues, capturing movement with video and performance and creating time-limited installations, I'm painting. Not only am I painting, I'm painting water and snippets of architectural spaces and attempting to create beauty.

I'm intrigued by opposites: movement vs stasis, ephemeral vs solid, dull vs shiny, light vs shadow, surface vs depth, smooth vs textured. Capturing movement on a static surface is a challenge. Creating something luminous, catching the shifts of light and shadow, imbuing the painting with a sense of that changeability is a tough challenge on a static surface. Nothing lasts forever in life but I'm trying to capture the moment and make that last in a painting while still showing time passing.

I'm driven to create beautiful paintings with complex surfaces where the juxtaposition of something solid: a wall, a tree, a rock, against an ephemeral shadow or reflection has led me to the need to balance another opposite—realism vs abstraction. My work has been trending toward abstraction in the portrayal of water while solid objects are becoming increasingly realistic. The trick is to knit the two together into a cohesive whole..

I use acrylic paints and work on three to six paintings at a time, different sizes, different substrates, different stages of development. I start with the paintings flat and do pours and washes, reveling in the happy accident. Then I put the paintings on my wall easel. I work on all the paintings at once jumping back and forth from one to the other. I'm convinced that this keeps the work energized. If I find myself getting too involved in one area of a painting I force myself to keep moving and keep the paintings open, free and flowing.

The nature of acrylic paints and mediums plus my training in the use of acrylic products has given me the facility to gain some control over the paint. On the other hand, I don't want all the control. Loss of control is where the magic can happen. All the hard work becomes worth it when alchemy happens and the paint becomes more than just paint, but something elusive and unexplainable. Doesn't happen all the time but enough to keep me going. It's like chasing a mirage, always a few feet, yards, miles away but just tantalizingly within reach.