

Melissa Chandon



Lost Hills, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 24"



LA Building with Palms on Left, 2006, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"

"She has developed an effective synthesis of abstract and representational elements in her works. This gives the works an intensity and raw graphic power to behold"

Wayne Thiebaud, Professor of Art Emeritus, University of California, Davis



LA VW Series, Bus on the Left, 2006, oil on canvas, 36" x 36"



LA VW Series with City Hall, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 12" x 16"



LA VW Series, Green Bus, 2006, oil on paper, 22" x 30"

Melissa Chandon's work features Americana icons such as roadside fast food restaurants from the 50s and 60s, historical Volkswagon Buses, and agricultural vehicles. Although much of the work is viewed from or on the roadways of America, Chandon's paintings resemble Pop Art, as she presents the iconic vehicles in isolation. Her sensibility resembles that of Tom Wesselmann in the 60s, but she clearly has found her own niche, integrating a view of the landscape with her symbols. Most of Chandon's work deals as well with compositions that David Hockney and Wayne Thibaud address in their work.

There is a loneliness and eeriness to Chandon's work as she isolates an object—whether it is a car, tractor, or building—and brings it to the forefront of the painting. Her images are abandoned, disappearing emblems of America. She has a clear and straightforward method of presenting her work: she gives the viewer an absolute understanding of the visual experience as one drives through the valley. The feeling of her paintings in this sense relates to Edward Hopper's lonely depictions of modern America. Chandon's interest lies in the rapidly disappearing traditional American tableaux; it is almost as if she is documenting the past.

John Natsoulas



Blue on the Horizon, 2006, oil on linen, 72" x 96"



Mohave Garage, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 12" x 16"

The best of Melissa Chandon's paintings perforate the viewer with a mix of psychological unease and sensual delight...It presents us with that same penetrating sensual pleasure—the momentary bodily experience of a slower, simpler life—as if at a remove, as if seen from the other side of the protective barrier of polarizing sunglasses. This distancing gives the seductive documentary vitality that runs through many of Chandon's rural and agricultural paintings a pop twist, drawing us back from our momentary salt-of-the-earth experience to more urbane and cultured reflections. In this way her work strikes the affective balance that characterizes any meaningful realism: it calls up deep-seated desires with an appeal to a world beyond our own while ever reminding us of the world here and now out of which those desires are born.

*Blake Stimson, Ph. D, Associate Professor of Art History, University of California, Davis
Field of interest: 20th Century and Contemporary Art, History of Photography, Historiography and Critical Theory*



Twenty-one Window VW Van, 2006, oil on paper, 22" x 22"

Melissa Chandon's oil paintings are rendered with a passionate physical language that evokes a deep feeling of isolation and loneliness amidst the welcoming Sacramento Valley air. The intentional use of negative space via shape and shadow create an aura of solitude and privacy to which the viewer is slowly drawn into the environment.

Chandon's representation of the conventional mid-20th century automobile and farm equipment reflect her traditional deserted landscape where a feeling of isolation persists. These vanishing subjects of beloved rural society bolster a need to ponder the past and create a personal connection with this rare slice of Americana. The deep shadows amongst the warm valley sky illuminate the lone utilitarian subject, and draw the viewer in for further consideration and personal recollections.

Jemima J. Harr, Museum Director-Curator, Morris Graves Museum of Art, Eureka, California



Knights Landing Silo's, 2006, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"

The surfaces of Chandon's paintings make her traditional subject matter seem contemporary. Yet, these same surfaces, along with Chandon's moody colors, evoke a sense of melancholy and mystery, serving as hazy veils that cloud our memory.

Scott A. Shields, Ph.D., Chief Curator, Crocker Art Museum



Gas Station, 2006, oil on canvas, 48" x 48"



Down the Avenue, 2006, oil on canvas, 48" x 48"



Snow King with Yellow Foreground, 2006, oil on canvas, 48" x 48"



Lifeguard Shack Series, Santa Cruz, 2006, oil on paper, 22" x 30"



Market, 2006, oil on linen, 72" x 96"



Lifeguard Shack Series, Santa Monica, 2006, oil on paper, 22" x 30"



Lifeguard Shack Series, Miami, 2006, oil on canvas 36" x 48"

Melissa Chandon considers herself to be an abstract realist. Among her greatest influences she cites the Bay Area Figurative painters, specifically Richard Diebenkorn. She also feels that were it not for her friend and mentor Professor Wayne Thiebaud she would not be the painter that she is today.

Perhaps her greatest influence, however, is her environment. "I have always been, even as a small child, strongly influenced by my environment. I paint narrative journals of my life which, in and of themselves, are complete worlds." The paradox of creating an image while portraying a complete story within the confines of a two-dimensional surface is the challenge foremost in Chandon's mind while she works. Chandon grew up on a family ranch outside of Winters, California and she continues to draw inspiration from that landscape, often returning to sketch and draw the familiar surroundings. The views from the ranch house flow from the coastal range to the vast openness of the surrounding farmland.

One of the most appealing and striking aspects of Chandon's work is the genuine feeling of honesty involved in the creation of her art. "I consider my paintings to be moments of expressed inspiration," she states and she hopes the existence of these paintings may bring happiness and a feeling of peace to the viewer. Chandon has a BFA from Santa Clara University; she also attended SUNY Purchase, University of Minnesota, and UC Davis where she studied with Professor Wayne Thiebaud. She currently resides in Northern California.

Southwest Art Magazine features Melissa Chandon in the January 2007 edition, as one of 10 painters on the Rise in 2007 in an article by Gussie Fautlerroy and Bonnie Gangelhoff, "10 Artists to Watch".