

NATURAL SURREALISM, MYSTICAL REALISM

PAMELA SUKHUM'S PAINTINGS CELEBRATE LIFE — AND ITS MYSTERIES — AT RAITMAN ART GALLERIES

by KIMBERLY NICOLETTI



GAZING UPON PAMELA

Sukhum's paintings is akin to being enveloped by a fresh, magical forest or finding respite in a colorful, uplifting world. Her vibrant works convey a sense of harmony and peace, all while inviting the eye — and the spirit — into a playful and intriguing exploration.

As an artist, she truly walks the walk when it comes to entering the mysterious unknown. In 2003, she left her stable, left-brained career as a researcher in cardiovascular health and

electrophysiology with a simple yearning: creative freedom. She found it upon a blank canvas, which opened up new frontiers, beyond language and logic.

Ultimately, she recognized that both science and art, in their purest forms, share a common thread: the search for truth, or why we exist.

"It's like having a dialogue with mystery itself — and allowing that mystery to take shape," she says of her paintings. "My works are intended to illumine the light that lives —

inextinguishable — within each of us, no matter our circumstances."

She divides her artwork into two collections: Natural Surrealism and Mystical Realism. Both emerge from a flowing, meditative state, and though they involve different approaches, the result expresses universal truth, or essence.

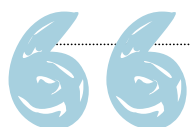
Her large flowers, waves and other highly textural pieces in the Natural Surrealism collection stem from spending time outdoors, be it surfing, swimming, climbing, hiking or otherwise communing with nature.

"I love being immersed in the outdoors because it reveals the

essence of who we are," she says.

"We are made from the same elemental forces that shape the world around us, yet we often forget this truth — that we are not separate from the natural world, but at our core, deeply intertwined with it. To remember nature is to remember ourselves."

Her Natural Surrealism paintings begin with a burst of energy: She follows her impulses, spreading wide brushstrokes throughout the canvas, which she places on the floor to prevent the thick paint from sliding off. It's a vigorous process that involves moving her whole body. As she works, she might carve out flowers



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LEFT: "Mystic Mountain," by Pamela Sukhum, mixed media, 36" x 60".

BELOW: "Vistas of the Heart," by Pamela Sukhum, mixed media, 40" x 40".

OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: "Resplendence," by Pamela Sukhum, mixed media, 40" x 40".

BOTTOM: "Transcendence," by Pamela Sukhum, mixed media, 36" x 36".

from the textural layers, pulling away paint as if watching the flower bloom.

"There isn't a moment for thought or judgment to arise. I trust every stroke," she says. "It's a surrender — each movement guided by something deeper, as if the painting is revealing itself through the brush, with me both creating and witnessing it come to life in the same breath."

Once the canvas dries, she enters a more contemplative state, as she goes over every square inch with a tiny, 20-hair paintbrush, adding rich details. It's here that the story, and title, of the painting often reveals itself.

Her luminous Mystical Realism collection arose from a year of silence around 2010, after she felt herself increasingly turning inward. One lamp in her cave-like studio illuminated a blank canvas.

"Everything around me was kept dark and silent to encourage a journey inward — going further and further into stillness and silence. It was a process of distilling everything to its pure essence," she says, adding that this collection literally begins within the unknown with a simple, minuscule dot on the canvas, rather than a predetermined image, story or idea. "I watch the layers of the painting



rise quietly, almost imperceptibly, gradually revealing themselves like something unreal and mystical slowly coming into focus."

Within her paintings, she doesn't attempt to recreate what she sees in nature. Rather, she expresses its essence in original ways, almost as a hymn, or in praise of nature's splendor.

"Often, we see something and immediately label it, filing it

away as a familiar experience. But if we can hold on to a sense of wonder, curiosity and discovery, we keep the ability to see the world and our lives with fresh eyes," she says.

Mystical Realism takes her deeply meditative states, which stretch far beyond linguistic expression, and gives them form visually.

"I'm drawn to painting what uplifts and reminds us of our greatest

potential, as well as the balance and harmony in all things — especially in a time when so much feels divided," she says. "Now more than ever, we need to be reminded of our inherent goodness, well-being, and the power of harmony and balance."

Her background in chemistry led to a 10-year journey to find a way to customize paint so it appears glassy and wet, long after it dries. It's this translucent quality, as well as her sweeping lines and intricate details, that give her paintings dimension, vibrancy and a sense of movement.

"I wanted my ongoing experiment and sense of discovery to be carried over to the medium itself, making paint look glasslike, wet, and shimmering — almost as if it's still in motion, alive rather than static or fixed," she says.

In addition to meditation and time spent in nature, her world travels, from Tibetan monasteries to African refugee camps, inform her work, as she seeks out universal, cross-cultural truths.

In 2006, she launched her nonprofit, Beautiful Project. It began by employing art in refugee camps as a healing tool and expanded to community mural projects, in which diverse members create a mural together. She works with the United Nations, Big Brothers Big Sisters and other organizations.

"Artmaking gave me back my sense of humanity and self-empowerment, and out of deep appreciation, I wanted to share that great transformational process with others."

To that end, a portion of every sale of her artwork benefits Beautiful Project.

The exhibition will run through the month of September, with the artist appearing at the gallery September 12–14, 2025.

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