

Meigs, Sandra

Prescription for My Reverie

A big fat mouse's back is cropped off on the left side of the painting, making a straight Indigo blue edge. The blue mouse has a huge ear and a huge nose. Its silly feet are exactly at the bottom, under its big belly.

With the blue mouse there, I think of a lilac bunny just standing there on its two feet. The bunny's ears are very long and skinny, standing straight up. The lilac bunny is leaning against the right edge of the painting, looking poised to confront the blue mouse. There is an empty space between them and I want it filled with more creatures.

So, I paint a crocodile, in Burnt Sienna, with its rear half cropped off. The crocodile juts down vertically from the top edge of the painting. I insert the crocodile to fit between the noses of the blue mouse and the lilac bunny, both nice noses.

The skinny, elongated, Yellow Ochre coyote is walking head-on, facing out, fitting right under the blue mouse's nose.

Then there is still some space between the coyote and the bunny. I think of a turquoise frog with long toes and fingers jumping up. I place it there. The turquoise frog touches the coyote and the bunny.

All of these five creatures are now packed into the 16" X 12" painting, looking comfortable with each other. I then fill in the negative space with bits of other "behind" creatures. You cannot tell what they are. Except that a small blue hand, at the end of an arm, does seem to reach and touch the mouse's belly. Very nice.

Any remaining space is painted black. I love this painting, and I title it "A Bunch, Including Blue Mouse."

I paint a yellow pelican with its beak spread wide open to the expanse of the width of the painting. The two tips of its beak are just touching either edge of the painting.

Inside the open mouth of this creature, there are: a skeleton head, a pink rabbit's head, another skeleton head, and a lady with her arm hanging down outside the pelican's beak. She has a mitten on that hand, the colour of Burnt Sienna. A crocodile, also of Burnt Sienna,



is jumping upward from the bottom of the painting; to bite her hand.

All of the negative space is painted black.

After I am done, I count all the creatures in the painting; six. Then I title it “The Sextet”.

I found an image of a chicken figurine online, made of Bakelite. I like it, so I paint it in the bottom right of the painting with its back cropped off against the right edge. The chicken’s beak is yellow, short, fat, and curvy. Its mouth is slightly parted, so it shows a little of the roof of the mouth, which is red. The body of it is pale Burnt Sienna. Its bright red eye appears to glow from inside its head because it has a tiny pinpoint highlight.

The way I paint the chicken makes it seem concerned as it looks upward toward a duckling with long, dangling, orange web-feet. I found the image of the duckling online while searching “duck feet underwater.” I arrange the duckling with the dangling feet exactly so that its slightly open beak touches the top of the painting, and its right foot touches the chicken’s bottom beak.

Then I want a creature in the top right corner of the painting to span the space between the duckling’s beak and the top of the chicken. So I paint a Dalmatian dog in muddy brown with black spots. Its tail is pointing up and out towards the right edge of the painting.

I then paint a gentle lady’s blue hand and arm falling downward, into the painting. She is holding a pretty pink bird that is relaxed in her hand.

Then I fill in the negative space with black.

In order to set the lady’s hand and the bird off, I lighten that area of the background to soft grey.

I love this painting. I title it “The Five, Including the Blue Hand.”

When I feel I’ve gotten the colours and the composition of a painting exactly right, I feel really good and sometimes go into a reverie while looking at the finished work.

In the painting titled “The Foursome, Including Chicken,” the colours of the figures are all pale, making the figures stand out against the negative space.

A pale yellowy-brown stork stands on the left, with its beak pointing downward into the space. I got the image of the stork from a Bakelite toy figurine that I found on a website that sells vintage goods. I often find things on this site, but I cannot afford to buy them, so I take a screenshot and sometimes put their image into my paintings. I immediately loved this stork and coveted it, so I use my photo of it to put into the painting.



An even paler tawny-brown horse is kind of awkwardly positioned in the lower right corner of this painting. Its two front hooves lean onto the stork's long left leg. This horse has two tiny pinpoint black eyes, which I like. The horse appears to be sitting up on its haunches and looks quite squished into its bottom right corner, which I like.

Behind the stork on the top left side of the painting, I paint a very pale yellow chicken with its beak open. The beak is slightly browny-orange, pale and open, which allows the open mouth to show off a lovely pale orange.

Open bird beaks are fun to paint because the contrasting colour provides an opening into the painting.

The chicken has a tiny black eye. The comb and wattle of the chicken are the same tawny-brown of the horse, only a little bit darker.

Then there is a butler leaning into the scenario with these animals. He is grey. The top of his head is bald, making him seem old and wise. He appears to be in formal dress, based on the very subtle black line of his collar with the three tiny black buttons on his shirt.

I then paint the negative space black, which makes the very subtle colour changes stand out as animal forms, and this also sets off the butler's formal manner.

Who knows why the butler joined this group of three, but I like him. I title this painting "The Foursome, Including Chicken." But maybe it should be "The Threesome plus a Butler."

I made more paintings in this series. I am calling this series "A Dog Named Goose," because my favourite painting in the series is the one with the yellow Dachshund jumping up to kiss (or maybe bite) a waddling yellow goose on its very orange beak.

The other characters in the painting, a wide-eyed stork, and a bonneted old-timey lady, seem to be amused by the goose and the dog. And then I thought, "I think the yellow Dachshund loves this goose, so I will name him Goose, and goose and dog will be friends."

This series kept me busy in the studio for many months, and for that I am grateful to it. I am wondering why there are so many creatures with beaks in these paintings, and I think that's because they can be made to take up space any which way with their beaks open, closed, pointing up or down, thereby helping to navigate the compositions. This work has given me many hours of thinking about story-like characters, colour interactions and compositions. Soon I will varnish the little paintings and take them to the framer.

Sandra Meigs, 2026

