*The Ladies*

by

Ayris Hatton

www.AyrisHatton.com

I am often confounded when asked what my paintings mean. I enjoy a certain ambiguity in art, images that allow the viewer a personal, intimate interpretation and experience. I have painted *The Ladies* hoping they will communicate what I felt when I conceived them. But I’ve found people inevitably ask so I will try to meet the curious viewer half way and also share a little about how I work.

This series is about being in one’s essential nature, underneath personality and beyond everyday concerns. I use symbols (animals, books, nature, the cosmos) as metaphors. Some of the figures are depicted in imagined scenes that hint of how we might find equanimity in the face of threatening forces. Some of the figures are playful and insouciant. All of them raise questions about femininity, spirituality and religion, sensuality and how we might connect with our life force even in the face of danger or degradation, be it imagined or real.

I paint primarily female figures because I am a female. Some of these paintings contain social and religious commentary. These women might bring awareness of pervasive patriarchal religious teachings by honoring the Mother and the Daughter in the age of the Father and the Son. Some of them suggest female faces for God.

So far, *The Ladies* series consists of 15 pieces: 2 smaller oils, a watercolor, a drawing and 11 oil/panels (Moon Levitation consists of two 4’ x 7’ panels).

I have painted the oils using a contemporary classical technique. First, I hire a model and make several drawings and watercolor studies of the figure and its place in the conceived composition. I then create a full scale drawing or 'cartoon' and transfer it to the prepared panel with graphite. Next I underpaint in loose transparent gestural layers of oil and purposefully leave evidence of dripping media and brushwork. I superimpose the classically painted figure on the abstract ground and I weave some of the initial strokes back into the figure. I continue to paint with transparent glazes and finally, a few opaque lights. I finish each piece with a clear glaze or varnish to bring out the layers of color.

I also sculpt the figure and face, both female and male and I paint everyday scenes of people, some with a message. I have attended a figure group for years where I depict the model using a variety of materials. And I still enjoy painting landscape and still life. One subject seems to complement the other.

As I have painted these women in the quiet of my studio, I think they have been companions and seers in my quest for inner knowledge and peace.