



# City of Dreams Artist Layla Fanucci

By Sherrie Wilkolaski





Art is one of those things in life that that is all around us. It can be experienced in unlimited presentations and enjoyed by all the senses.

Personally, I don't take enough time to appreciate the talent that crosses my path every day. We are creatures of habit. Listening to the same music, going to the same museums, and so on. When I do make my way to a museum, I tend to gravitate to my favorite pieces. One of the best ways for me to discover something new if I'm not out and about, is in a book. Recently I was given a copy of Layla Fanucci's "City of Dreams Unabridged" art book and

it really touch me. I knew from the moment I laid eyes on the first piece, that I have found a new artist that is going to be a staple in my personal favorites.

Born in San Francisco in 1957, Layla Fanucci's artistic talent was first expressed in music. Fanucci, along with her brother and sister, was encouraged by her parents to study multiple instruments, learning to play the piano, clarinet, and guitar. She went on to teach the guitar, putting herself through San Francisco State University by giving lessons. She pursued a degree in sociology, and graduated in 1980. Fanucci had married her husband Robert the previous year and in 1981 they moved with their infant daughter to New York City, where he attended law school, and where they had a second daughter. Four years later they also had a son. They returned to California after two years in New York, and eventually the family settled in St. Helena, in the Napa Valley, where Robert practices tax law and produces wine, and Layla has her painting studio.

Beginning in 1975, Fanucci taught music and guitar both privately, and in schools, ranging from the elementary to the high school level. She became the director of music at the St. Helena Catholic Church, and wrote and directed concerts at the church's elementary school. Fanucci has noted that of her many roles, it was composing music that gave her the most gratification. In the next stage of her creative life, this impulse for artistic invention was to be given full reign. In 1999, she found herself wanting some "big, live art" (as she describes it) for her home. Finding nothing to her liking, she bought some art supplies and created a large, colorful abstract painting.

Fanucci's first painting opened the floodgates to the hundreds of paintings that have emerged during the ensuing years. By 2000, she was ready to stop teaching music and devote herself full-time to making art. She followed her first painting with a version of Matisse's *The Red Studio*, followed by two other works inspired by the same artist. Then she began to create portraits of her family, still life, city scenes, and abstractions with figures. These paintings, while diverse in character, often had vibrant color, bold forms, energetic brush strokes, and a sense that whatever the style, the painting was charged with underlying emotion. Fanucci's



canvases evince a real pleasure in the act of creating, and she has said that, "Every time I paint I get the same feeling of electricity, satisfaction, and completion" that she had first experienced in creating musical works. Among her influences beyond Matisse, she cites the work of Picasso and Cezanne, her architect father, and her extensive travels.

Those travels emerged as a source of an on-going series of paintings, each inspired by a specific city. These dense images realized in black brush strokes on colored grounds, capture both a sense of place and the wonder and intensity of urban life. Fanucci's challenge was to develop a style of painting that no one paints, in the world. She found that style layering city on top of city. Layering color, then painting the architectural design in black oil, another layer of color and another city. Fanucci's paintings have been exhibited in many galleries and museums. Notably, The Walter Wickiser Gallery in New York, The Christopher Hill Gallery in Saint Helena, Andrews Art Museum in North Carolina, Chasen Gallery in Virginia, Le Musee de Marrakech in Morocco, Jayson Samuel Gallery, Lisa Freedman Fine Arts, 750 Wines Studio, VAM Art Inc. Gallery. She has received many commissions and her work is in numerous private collections.

**Here are some other interesting facts about Layla:**

**Preferred medium(s):** Layla prefers to work with oil on linen and oil on canvas and she paints at her studio which is also Charter Oak Winery.

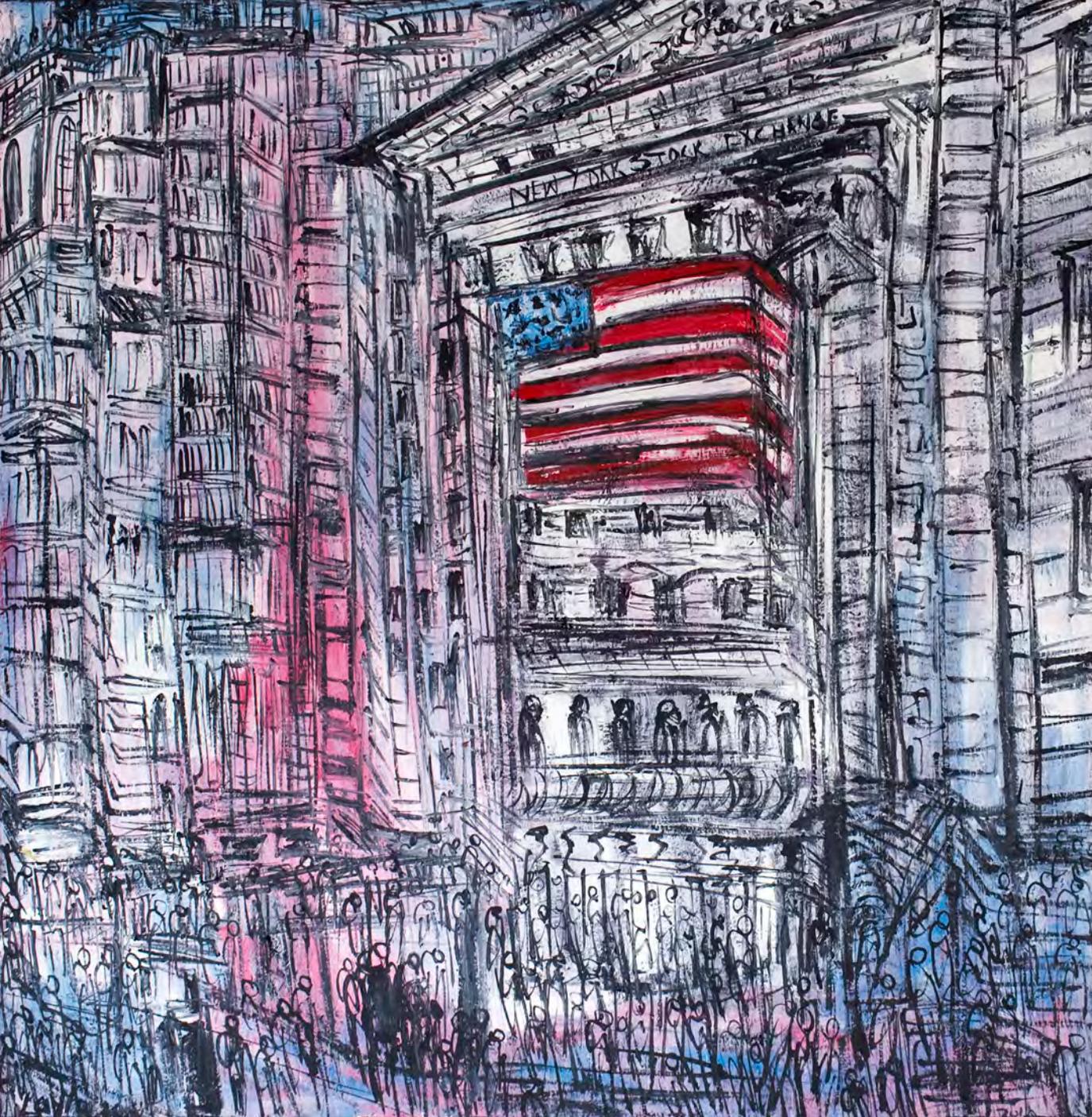
**Her studio:** The studio and winery is an historical home built in 1900. 831 Charter Oak was the home of her husband's Grandfather Guido Raggihianti. The property has been in the family for 70 years.

**Most memorial art experience:** Exhibiting her paintings (30 paintings) at the Muse de Marrakech in Morocco in 2010. "Seeing the works in this beautiful, historical museum was an honor. Seeing the reaction and appreciation from the travelers and visitors viewing my painting in the museum was heartwarming."

**Artist she would travel anywhere to see:** Matisse

**Creative philosophy:** "First, find something to offer the world that





no one offers. I found a style of painting that no one paints, in the world. In my work, there is city on top of city, color, the architectural design on top, another layer of color, another city. Underneath the painting you see lives 2-4 full cities/paintings. Second, focus on the business side as well as the creative side."

**Art or music?** "I was always interested in music. I changed mediums from music to art in 1999. Many people though see music notes, staff etc. in my work. My father and grandfather were architects, all this background comes out in my work. My story how I started is in my book City of Dreams Unabridged."

**On Picasso:** "If I could be another artist for the day, it would be Picasso because he was famous for his works while he was alive and he lived a long life. Other people's art makes me want to get back to the studio. It inspires me to work harder just by viewing it."

**Advice to other artists:** "I've learned that there is no one that will help you like you can help yourself. You have to create something unique and then you have to present it to the world, step by step, yourself. If you want it, you have to create it. The marketing, making contacts, meeting people, exposing yourself, all the business part of art must come from you. The creating the works is one big job, the selling and marketing of the works is another big job and there is no one who can do it but you."

**Favorite exhibitions:** NY in Chelsea WWG, at the Muse de Marrakech in Morocco.

**Favorite moment as an artist:** Selling six paintings to one couple, over \$200,000.00 of art in 15 minutes.

To learn more about artist Layla Fanucci go to [www.laylafanucci.com](http://www.laylafanucci.com).

