

Afterword

By Anne Hevener

## Drawn To the White

Arranging each still life with a limited color scheme allows a painter to celebrate the rainbow—one color at a time.

For Jane Lund, there's something very inviting about trying to reproduce the variety of close tones in a monochromatic still life. In *White Still Life*, the inspiration was, of course, the color white, which—as anyone who has ever purchased a wedding dress can tell you—offers a lot of tonal variety. “The color white has an ethereal quality about it,” Lund says. “I think that was its appeal in this particular painting.”

Lund's still life began when an artist friend gave her the large patty-pan squash—and the green table. From there, she went to several antique shops in search of the “right” crockery. “I like objects that have a little history—that look used,” she says. “Being a bit worn, they are ‘quieter’ in their essence, and lend themselves to getting along with the other objects.”

Because of the time involved in a painting (this one took 11 months), Lund usually chooses still-life subjects that she knows will last a long time. In this case, she knew the squash would not, so she was forced to work differently, adding to the challenge. Whereas she ordinarily works from back to front, finishing a background before her subject; this time, she began with the still-life items first. “I put in some background color to start, but basically, after I'd painted the still life, I had to go in and paint the whole background—this old wood with lots of detail and striations. I had to hold my stick at weird angle to do it. It was pretty tricky.”

Lund says that all her still lifes have been predominately monochromatic. When you stare at any object—regardless of its color—you start to see all the other colors in it. In this setup, first



there are the different colors of white—the white of the pitcher versus the white of the eggs and the squash—and then all of the reflected color. It's these nuances that are so appealing to Lund. “I seem to be working my way through the rainbow. At the moment, I'm back to blue again, and looking forward to red and yellow.”

*White Still Life* (30½x29¼) by Jane Lund

# Jane Lund

An artist's intense observation and meticulous technique lead her on meditative explorations of her subjects.

By Pat Matson Knapp

Jane Lund compares her creative process to the childhood game in which you repeat the same word over and over again until it loses the essence of its original sound and meaning. "Just like we trust that the sound of a familiar word carries the meaning we always understood, we tend to accept what's in front of our eyes as being reality," Lund says. "But I

feel there's always something else there to see, if I just look hard enough to shake my perception of what I *think* it is." So the artist is constantly asking: What is reality? "I'm always in that questioning mode when I start to work—that state of not knowing. What is this? What is this *really*? I love that exploration."

That sense of wonder permeates all of Lund's art,



Portrait of My  
Mother's Hands  
(13¼x18½)

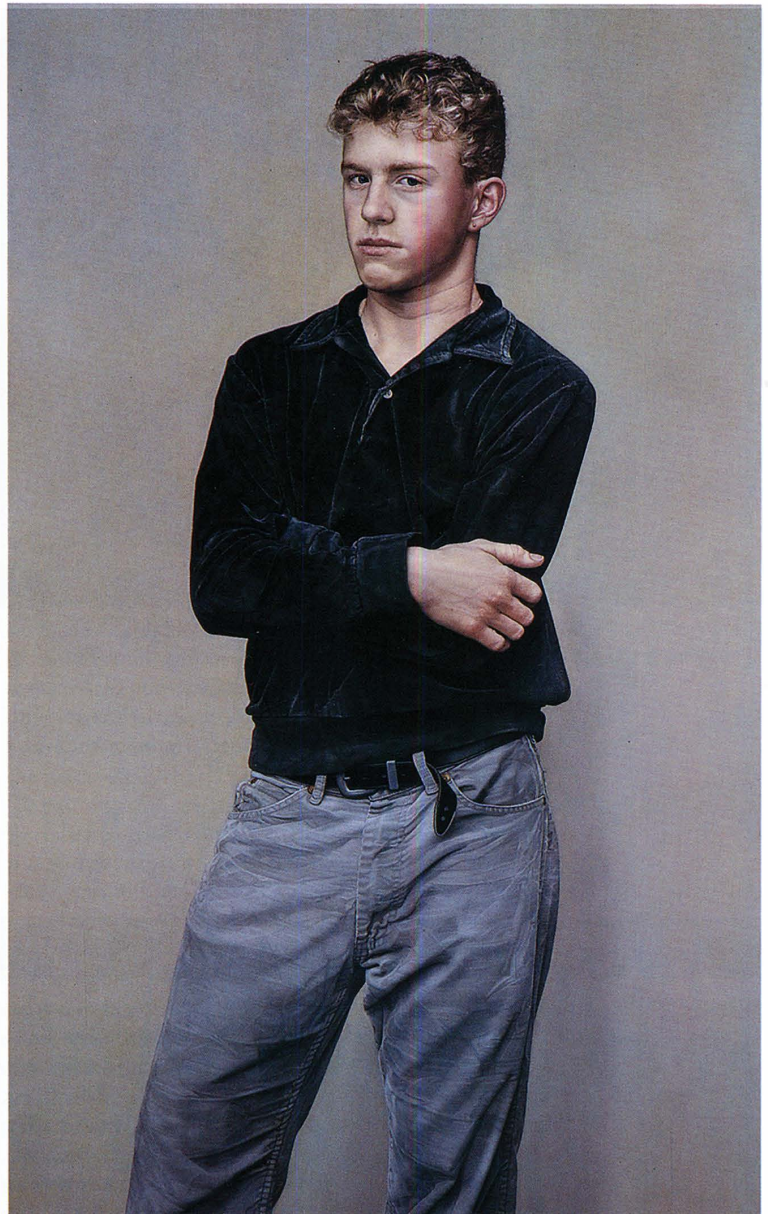
from her pastel still lifes and portraits to her fanciful watercolor collage work (see “The Lighter Side” on page 45). Resting a hand on her mahlstick to avoid touching the painting surface, Lund works slowly and meticulously on her pastels. “An inch a day,” she says matter of factly. Her willingness to study her subjects so carefully and render them so faithfully results in paintings with an intensely tactile quality—an almost palpable sense of reality. But photo-realism is not her goal. “Even though I look at everything in a really detailed way, sometimes the detail is too intense for my taste and I choose to soften it with glazing. I guess my goal is not so much to recreate exactly what I see with my eyes, but to search for that quality that’s not physically seeable.”

### From 7-Up to Sea Monsters

Born in Queens, N.Y., to a firefighter father and a mother who taught school, Lund always loved to draw. Two other childhood joys—comic books and paper dolls—were influences that would later appear in her work. It was a struggle, though, to find her niche as a young artist. After graduating from high school at 16, she enrolled at the Pratt Institute, but left after only a year. “I was a diligent student in the classes I loved, like drawing, but not in the ones I didn’t like,” she recalls. “At the end of the semester, they told me I’d have to go to summer school to come back in the fall, and my dad said, ‘That’s it, you’re going to work.’”

After a few weeks of her father throwing *The New York Times* want ads into her room every morning, Lund went to work as a technical illustrator for an advertising agency. “That job doesn’t exist anymore because of computers, but what I did was mechanical drawings of flow charts, internal posters and that sort of thing.” One of her early assignments was to draw the bubbles on the 7-Up logo. “That summer, I learned that this was an occupation, and that I liked earning my own way,” Lund says. Later, she worked for Colgate Palmolive for seven years. “What I really learned in those jobs was how to work, and how to get things done on time.” But during her 13 years as a technical illustrator, she also craved a more creative outlet, and spent lunch hours at local bookstores with her head buried in art books. At night, she took art classes at Queens College and the New School for Social Research. “I always had the idea that some day I would be a full-time artist. But I had to support myself.”

During those years, Lund also developed a love for travel, and visited Europe several times, including Venice, where she had an art scholarship. In the museums of Europe, she absorbed the works of Hieronymus Bosch, Francisco de Goya, Max Ernst, Vittore Carpaccio and many others. Among her favorite art heroes are the Dutch masters. “It’s such highly



realized work that has soul and poetry. I love very still art. Not just still life, but art that feels still. Like Vermeer, whose work has this feeling of a moment frozen in time, but with all the poetry and wonder that even the most ordinary of moments contain, if you really have your eyes and your heart open. If you experience life that way, everything is magic.”

At 29, married and living in the Boston area, Lund was laid off from her job at a large accounting firm. “It was the best thing that ever happened to me,” she insists. “I was able to collect unemployment for a year—it was my ticket to becoming an artist.” Lund will never forget sitting at her kitchen table that first morning after the layoff. “This is what I had been

*Portrait of the Artist's Son (52¼x32)*



*Twins* (21¼x28)

praying for, but I remember sitting there thinking: Now what do I do?" She made a drawing of a woman standing on a rock in the middle of the ocean, with the heads of sea monsters emerging from the water all around her.

### Mystery and Meaning

In the 35 years since, Lund has, in some way or another, always lived her life through and in her paintings, and she herself has also been her most frequent subject. "My art has evolved as I have evolved as a person, and there's really no separating the two," she explains. "After several years of working as an artist, I realized that there was more to the process than I thought. Not only was I making art, but I was giving birth to myself as a person."

Lund's early work was surrealistic, inspired in part, perhaps, by the works of Max Ernst that she'd seen on exhibit in Venice. "My friends say my work still has a surrealistic quality to it," she notes. "It's not conscious exactly, but stems from my sense that things are not exactly as they appear. I might paint an apple, but there's some other force behind it—some sense of wonder and mystery."

Early paintings, such as *Spring Morning* (on page 46), feature dreams and other fantasies Lund explored as she painted. "In *Spring Morning*, you see a woman sleeping, and through an open door in the background you can see the spring morning. Three little gremlins wearing monk-like robes are standing at her feet, and there's a sense that they're bringing her a message or watching over her. They might know something the viewer doesn't know. The important thing is: I don't know either." As often happened, Lund used herself as the model for the painting, working from black

and white Polaroids her husband took and supplementing them with views from outside her window. The gremlins were modeled after photos of monkeys she found in a science magazine.

*Anniversary* (on page 46), which depicts Lund and her husband seated at a table, was a watershed painting for the artist, because it inspired her to begin painting still lifes. "In *Anniversary*, I painted the figures from Polaroids. Then I wanted to place meaningful objects on the table: a lamp given to us by the minister who married us, a vase of flowers and a bowl of oranges that appeared frequently in my work in those days. So I set up a still life and painted those objects from life. In a certain way, the objects are more fully realized in the painting than the figures."

### A Meditative Process

Lund has tried acrylics and oils, and continues to work in watercolor, but pastels have been her primary medium since a friend first suggested them back in her kitchen-table days. "At heart, I'm a draftsman who wants to make 'paintings,' which made pastels a terrific choice," she explains.

Over the years, she has developed a highly finished technique in which she builds up layers of pastels that are applied in tiny strokes. Using the still life as subject matter, she taught herself to render form, shadow, line and color with her pastels through this detailed and meditative process. And it can be very time-consuming; many of her paintings take up to 18 months to complete. "I spend a lot of time sharpening the pastels," she says, laughing.

Usually working on just one painting at a time, Lund first completes a series of small sketches to work out composition, then does an actual-sized charcoal drawing on paper, refining it extensively until she achieves the accuracy and detail she's after. Then, she copies the charcoal drawing onto tracing paper and transfers it to her gray Canson paper by going over it in white pastel on the back of the tracing paper. "So I get a faint white line that appears on the gray paper for me to use as a guide," she explains. "That's my foundation. Then I redraw it using those guidelines. I have all my lines there so I don't have to move things or erase."

Lund chooses Canson paper because of its super-smooth surface. "I like the surface to look like a painting," she notes. "When I rub my pastel into the Canson paper, it doesn't rub off, but looks very smooth." Her pastel palette includes Rembrandts for the body of the paintings ("They're not too hard and not too soft, and they don't fall off the paper"); Nu-pastels for detail work ("They're great because they sharpen well"); and Holbein soft pastels, which she

uses as blending sticks. “I like to use the Holbeins and Nupastels to blend my underlayers, almost like glazing,” she explains. She also uses Girault “because they’re very soft and come in beautiful colors.”

Lund works methodically, moving from left to right and top to bottom, partly because she likes an intensely smooth surface and doesn’t like using fixative. “I tell my students to work the whole painting, but I can’t do it,” she says, laughing. Progress is slow while Lund works the detail in one area, blocking in the darkest-value masses, often using several layers to achieve the color she envisions. Massing in color using the sides of her pastels, she blends with her fingers, then transitions between different colored areas using tiny, feathery strokes. Her mahlstick is a constant companion.



Jane Lund

The backgrounds of Lund’s still lifes and portraits are often neutral and contrast highly with the subject matter—a crisp, clean look she thinks may be a visual holdover from the *Little Lulu* cartoon strips she loved as a child. “I really think they influenced me,” she says. “Everything was always very clear and sharp—no fuzzy background. I liked that.” But though they may look simple, her backgrounds are actually complex combinations of four or five colors. “No matter how many colors you have in your pastel box, there’s never that exact right one,” she explains. And because she works from the background out, and in sections, she carefully records those color combinations so that she knows what to do for the next background section. She uses the same system to record often-repeated color combinations such as kin tones. “So my table and work area are littered with all these loose slips of paper with color formulas on them,” Lund says.

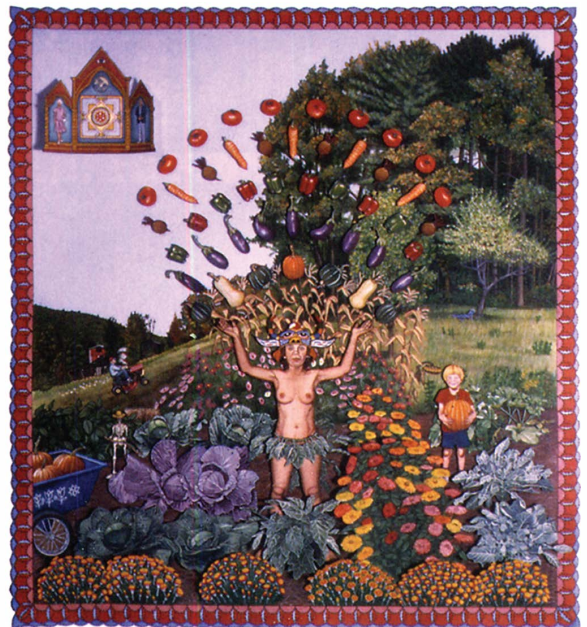
#### Pottery and Passages

As a result of her intense scrutiny and meticulous process, Lund’s still lifes and portraits are almost startlingly tactile. She chooses her still life subjects with texture in mind: bumpy gourds, cups and pots bearing the patina of age and use, glassware and ceramics that glow dully in the light. In *Still Life with Green Pottery* (on page 46), she painted pieces of French farm pottery collected by the painting’s owner, supplemented by ordinary objects from her own kitchen: a pewter tray, a wooden spoon, and bulbs of garlic. Like the Dutch Masters whose

## The Lighter Side

In between her intricate pastel works, Jane Lund unwinds with a lighter, faster form of artistic expression—fanciful watercolor collages that she describes as more diary entry than painting. “It’s another tributary to my work that’s very different from my pastels, but part of who I am as an artist,” she explains. “It’s something fun for me to do when I’m finished working on a difficult pastel painting.” Almost always themed around family or friends, Lund’s “recreational” collages are informed by her love of comic book art and pop-up books, as well as her interest in Indian moghul painting.

After making detailed drawings that she transfers to her Arches watercolor paper using vellum, Lund paints the background directly on the paper, then paints the elements separately on watercolor paper and cuts them out with an X-Acto knife. She then glues them to the background using a tab of paper to separate the two and make the elements pop up from the background. *The Garden*, set in Lund’s backyard, is themed around one of her favorite pastimes and depicts her as a fertility goddess. Nearby, her son is shown helping with the garden. Her husband appears on a mower in the background, and her parents also appear, flanking a mandala that adds a spiritual element to the piece. “These seem a little schizophrenic since they’re so different from my other work,” says Lund. “But I think they both share a kind of mystical quality—a feeling that there’s more there than meets the eye.”



*The Garden* (watercolor collage, 13½x14½)