



## Painting the Whimsical World from Sausalito



*Academy of Art University alumnus Salvatore Giacona in his studio in Sausalito. Courtesy of Salvatore Giacona.*

BY ALISON PIERCE

Sicilian-born Salvatore Giacona, who attended Academy of Art University in the early 1970s, embodies a pure joy for painting. At 72 years old, Giacona still paints with oil on canvas every day in his Sausalito studio. His subjects range from sceneries to animal faces to the mysteries of the universe. His paintings are literally piling up around him, yet each is precious and has a singular story.

Giacona was born, it seems, with this intense drive to paint.

“When I was maybe seven, I had an urge to paint. Out of the blue I had to paint!” said Giacona. “And right away, I mixed my colors with oil [and] powder. You could buy the powders in Palermo, to mix with oil, so I could paint. And I painted on bathroom tiles that you could find in rubbles after the war.”

As a boy, Giacona would search through piles of bombed out buildings for the best looking tiles to paint on. Selling some of his creations encouraged him to paint more.

“I was in love with the sceneries,” he said. “So I painted the local sceneries and sceneries from magazines. I had to do something. And I stayed with sceneries [for] a long time. Then I developed an interest in painting flowers, faces, animals. And many other subjects.”

Giacona painted on through his adolescence and young adulthood when he moved to Houston, Texas to catch up with a Giacona brother who had settled there.

“I didn’t like Texas at all,” he said, describing Texas as not a picturesque place. “People told me about San Francisco was a beautiful city, so I drove here. And here, I [loved] it from the first day. In fact, I painted so many views, scenes and panoramas of San Francisco.”

In San Francisco, Giacona enrolled at the Academy to fine-tune his painting skills and there he learned more about shading, light and perspective. “I learned many other things, which I gladly accepted. They helped me to improve my ability to paint.”

One of his most distinct memories was driving to the school every day and parking on Sutter Street. “I remember there were no tickets and no meters,” he said. “It was fantastic!”

Giacona worked in restaurants as a waiter to pay his way through school and to raise his family, a boy and a girl, both artists today. He also found that showing off photos of his artwork to restaurant customers was a brilliant way to sell his art. In 1977, Giacona moved to Sausalito, another of his very favorite picturesque places.

“I think I am the quintessential Sausalito artist, because I paint so many sceneries. I even painted a series of 20 houseboat paintings,” said Giacona, who considers Sausalito, San Francisco and Venice, Italy to be the three most beautiful cities in the world. “I love to paint the houses, the water and the reflections.”



*'South 40 Trio Sausalito House Boats Scene.'* Oil on canvas. Painting by Salvatore Giacona.



*'Venetian Carnival no. 27,' 2002. Oil on canvas. Painting by Salvatore Giacona.*

Giacona paints in a combination of styles that he describes as romantic realism, neo-impressionism, pointillism and his own capriccio style. He expresses his

eclectic artistic talent with a whimsical touch and combines the rigidity of lines with the freedom of colors. He loves to focus on famous architecture in vibrant color, for example his “Chaos and Order” series, now on display at the Marin Covenant Church, combines architectural marvels with spirituality and the mysteries of the universe.

“The universe is the biggest mystery, which is chaos, big chaos, no? We came to Earth and we brought order through the architectural styles,” said Giacona.

Giacona says that his ideas for paintings come out of the blue. And while his subject matter might be out of the blue and sometimes even off the wall, the details of his artwork can be painstakingly precise and often take months to complete. “I love details,” he said. “I indulge in it because for some reason I love the details.”

At one point Giacona fell in love with the Venetian Carnival and painted a series of 52 paintings of it. “It’s a lot you know,” said Giacona, who estimates he has painted about 500 paintings in his lifetime. “It’s not like one a day like Van Gogh did. I had to maintain a family, to work and to paint.”

Now that he is retired, Giacona cannot be bothered to travel or to visit some of the famous places that are the subjects of his artwork. He is too busy and too happy painting. Giacona would love to visit his beloved Venice, for instance, because though he has 52 paintings of the carnival and many more of Venetian architecture, yet he has never actually been there himself.

“I would love to go. I never take the decision and buy the ticket and say go,” he said. “I’m still here because I’m more interested in painting. Every day I must produce. It’s a must. It’s something that I cannot shake it off. Produce, produce.”

Giacona gets many of his scenes and architectural information from the Internet, books and magazines.

“Venice, to me, it’s a beautiful city. So much beauty seen from many angles,” he said. “Now the Internet shows us so much. The Internet is fantastic!”

Giacona’s current fascination is painting animals. He has 32 dogs and counting now, done in his whimsical capriccio style. His goals moving forward are to keep producing, keep painting, so that friends and people can enjoy it. It’s as simple as that.

“I’ve found that my latest years are the best years, because I don’t have to work anymore or struggle looking for customers,” said Giacona. “I just paint. Good music. And colors. And I love that. It makes me happy.”

Giacona's paintings can be found at [www.salgiacona.com](http://www.salgiacona.com) and his studio is always open for a visit.



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