



Dan Bacich

Nature's patterns

A carpet of freshly fallen leaves in the side yard of my family home was my initial inspiration. I took a few photographs before I returned to mowing the lawn. I was daunted by the complexity of patterns, the intricacy of shapes and the variety of colors in these photos. I wondered how I could transfer these impressions successfully to a canvas. I decided to paint on a dark background of burnt umber, slowly and meticulously building up each leaf from thin washes of color. The composition was an amalgam of multiple scenes stitched together to create a rich and vivid tapestry. The work was painstaking in its level of detail and I used a grid to progress inch by inch. These early compositions taught me an endless vocabulary of leaf forms and gave me a fluency in a language that only the very smallest things in nature speak.

In later works, I transitioned

Leaves Upon Leaves, acrylic,
36 x 24" (91 x 61 cm)

In this work I employed the same twisted perspective that ancient Egyptians used in their tomb paintings. The yellow maple leaf at the top of the image is delicately poised on its stem and the green catalpa leaf beneath. In the lower center, a coiled red sumac leaf rests atop another green catalpa leaf. Thus, the painting confounds the viewer with two conflicting perspectives: one looking down at the leaves and the other looking through them. The message I sought to convey was that of a community in which each leaf rests upon and supports another in a vast web of interdependence.





Ugly is Beautiful,
acrylic, 36 x 24"
(91 x 61 cm)

In this painting I played with the traditional notions of still life and landscape painting by combining both idioms in a single image. One art critic coined the term "leafscape" to describe the effect. A yellow calico speckled leaf rises like the sun above roiling blue clouds and a rocky mountainside. The title draws attention to the sensitively rendered earth tones in the crumpled catalpa leaf at the bottom half of the canvas. The poet Wallace Stevens said, "Death is the mother of beauty. Only the perishable can be beautiful."



Long and Short, acrylic, 36 x 24" (91 x 61 cm)

In close-up arrangements of leaves, I concentrate on the careful articulation of space and an almost three-dimensional rendering of shape and form. In the process, shadows become more pronounced and the use of highlights more important. Here the curved stem and elongated drooping of the central green catalpa leaf are contrasted elegantly against the abrupt curl of the smaller pink maple leaf. I used jewel tones of emerald and amethyst to impart a feeling of lush opulence to the scene. Although they are not grape leaves, these leaves would pair well with wine.



Up and Down, acrylic, 36 x 36" (91 x 91 cm)
This work was begun and halted in the final year of my mother's life. It hung on my studio wall unfinished for years. It would be hanging there still if not for the admiring words of a student who prompted me to bring the work to completion. It is more succinct visually and painted in a looser manner than earlier works. To me, it represents the distillation of everything I have learned from painting leaves and care giving for an elderly parent. I was particularly proud when it was selected for exhibition in *The Cooperstown National Juried Art Exhibition* in 2017.

from panoramas to close-up views. I deliberately omitted extraneous details such as insects, twigs or soil, focusing instead on particular arrangements of leaves. My style of painting was straightforward and expostory,

eschewing ostentatious brushwork in favor of illustration. I began taking liberties with both palette and depiction, painting images that went beyond photographic realism and ventured into the realm of pure imagination.

Autumn leaves became my expressive design elements and I manipulated them to convey an array of visual narratives and emotions. Today I believe I can communicate almost anything pictorially with a few simple leaves. [LA](#)

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Dan Bacich is an artist and educator who was born, raised and currently lives in North Syracuse, New York. He was educated in the fields of art history and religion, graduating magna cum laude from Harvard University in 1983. Thereafter he pursued graduate study on Rotary and DAAD fellowships to France and Germany where he lived and worked for many years. He returned to upstate New York in 1997 to care for his elderly mother and disabled younger sister. All his professional artistic endeavors date from this homecoming.

Bacich's media of preference are pencil, acrylics and assemblage. His greatest artistic pleasure is wielding the power of selection and arrangement and invoking a narrative where initially none was apparent. He has exhibited his work widely in Central New York and was a featured artist in MWPA's 62nd Exhibition of Central New York Artists. In 2010, Munson Williams Proctor Art Institute in Utica, New York, acquired one of his assemblages for its permanent contemporary art collection. In 2012, he was appointed superintendent of the *Fine Arts and Photography Exhibition* at the New York

State Fair and has also served as Juror of Selection for a variety of art competitions.

Currently Bacich is employed as lecturer and adjunct professor for the McNair Scholars Program and teaches at various campuses including SUNY Oswego, Syracuse University and Cornell University. Bacich's most recent leaf paintings will be featured in an upcoming solo show at Edgewood Gallery in Dewitt, New York, during the fall of 2020.

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