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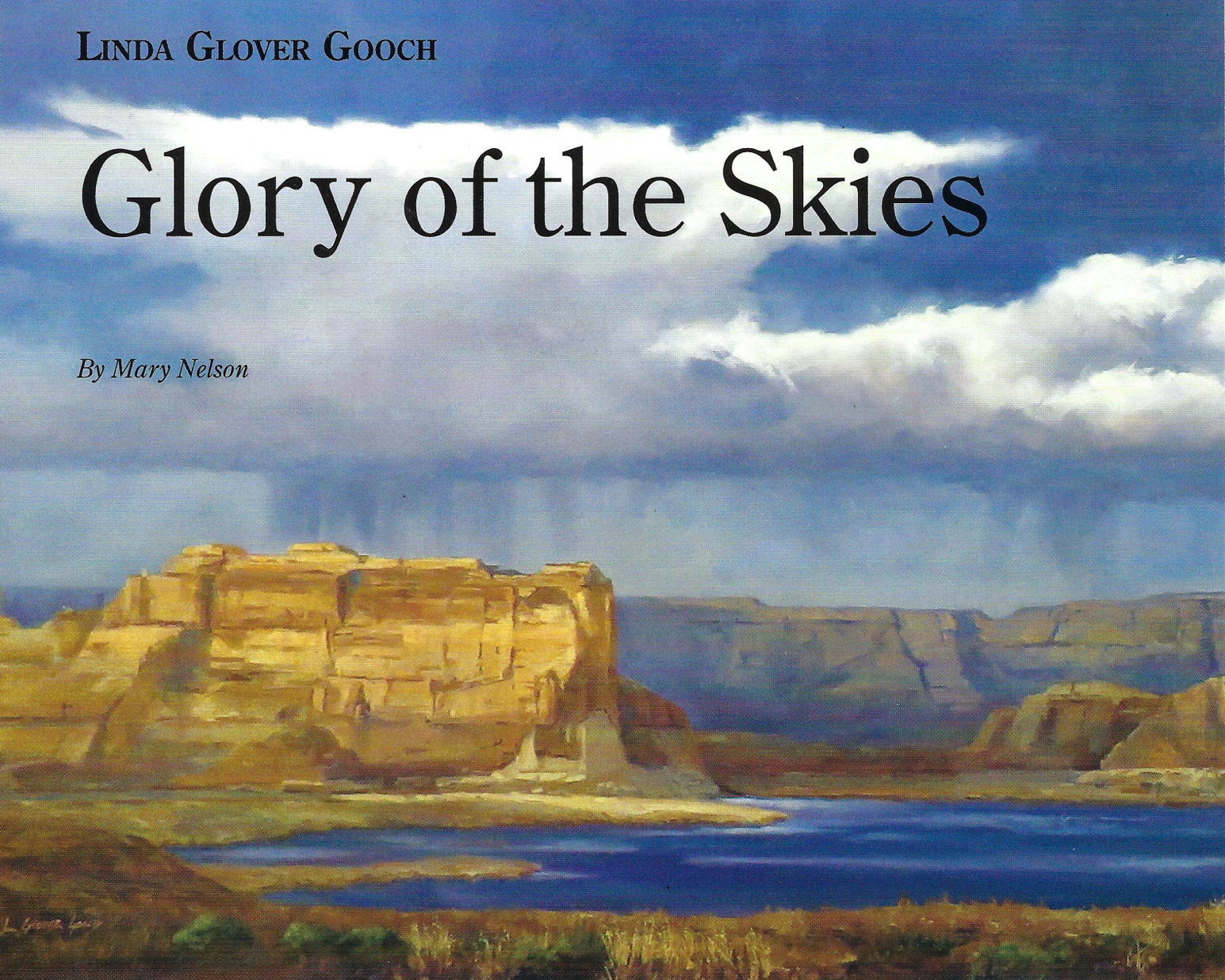
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Glory of the Skies

By Mary Nelson



Two days after Thanksgiving 2022, Arizona artist Linda Glover Gooch was up to her neck in details: finishing a large commission for a local patron, starting another large commission, preparing her online classes, and managing her Black Friday sale. “It’s been such a whirlwind, I just haven’t had time to stop and think,” she says. “But it’s a good kind of busy.”

Gooch took time to reflect on the many changes in her life and art, and she’s thankful for all of it—the good and the not so good. Her art career started with an epiph-

any when she was 13 and visited a friend’s studio. “I became enamored with my friend’s oil paintings, and I wanted some of those paints,” she says. “I told my mother, who really listened and started me in private art classes right then.”

Five years later, when she was 18, Gooch moved from Yucaipa, California, to Oceanside, where she found an art studio that offered workshops. She worked as a waitress while she was perfecting her craft and also got involved in the local art league. Within a year, Gooch was selling her paintings and had set





out on what would become a lifelong love affair with the Southwest. During the following 20 years, she also continued to take workshops and art classes with artists who inspired her—including Kevin Macpherson, Ray Vinella, Matt Smith, Scott Christensen, Joni Falk, and Joan Potter.

Gooch married Joe in 1985, and they eventually made their home in North Mesa, Arizona. The home and her studio are situated off a dirt road above the city. “We sit about a thousand feet higher than the valley,” she says. “We see the city lights at night and, when the monsoons

roll in, I have a front row seat. It’s a beautiful place for a sky painter.”

Gooch wasn’t always a sky painter. Her style—painterly with a looseness and detail that catches a viewer’s eye—lands somewhere between impressionism and realism and has remained constant over the years. Her subjects, however, began to change in 2005, when she fell in love with the magic of painting en plein air and discovering new vistas to recreate.

Mostly known for her still lifes and seascapes, Gooch began painting in the Grand Canyon and soon

(Above) Sacred Ground, oil, 28" by 70"

“Inspiration for this piece is from a photograph shot by the collectors. This view is from their property, and I was commissioned to paint it for them. Their request was to create a thunderstorm coming in over Lake Powell. Right up my alley! Such an honor.”

was focusing on landscapes and earning a reputation as a canyon painter, along with a growing list of collectors. She’d become com-



(Top left) *Journey into Sunset*, oil, 20" by 24"

"My favorite time of day is as the sun begins to set. From my home, I can see the lights of the distant valley begin to appear as evening approaches. Small, twinkling lights off in the valley begin to show up as the sun performs its evening ritual."

(Bottom left) *The Highway Home*, oil, 16" by 20"

*"Inspiration for this piece came from my daughter Lindsey. As she was traveling through Arizona, heading home, this sky appeared. Of course, my family knows to 'get a picture for mom!' And she did, hence the title *The Highway Home*."*



that day changed my destination." That, she'll tell you, is when she found her voice.

"I fell in love with the feeling of air and activity in the sky," Gooch says. "In a sense, there was a little bit of an inward spiritual experience for me. I realized there was more there than just what my eyes were taking in, and it just sort of painted itself." She believes her cloud paintings not only portray the air and an atmosphere but the life coming off them, and that is what draws people to her skiescapes.

With the move from landscapes to skiescapes, Gooch's palette isn't significantly different, but her technique is. "I'd call my palette pretty bold," she says. "I like color, but the refinement now is in the marks that I leave on the canvas. They can either be with a brush or by my hands. I paint with my fingers quite a bit."

Gooch also likes to leave little hidden signatures on her cloud scenes and never depicts a cloud exactly as she sees it in the sky. "I depict the cloud how I want it to be, how I bring it into my heart, my internal self, and I let my personality come back out of it," she says. "I teach that to my students, too."

Her faith, Gooch says, is what directs both her work and her per-

fortable with her palette and knew which colors fit her personality. Lighter and brighter were the atmospheres she most loved to render—at least until 2014.

Gooch recalls painting on a ridge while racing a thunderstorm that was building on the horizon. She worked feverishly to finish a sun-drenched canyon scene. All the while she was looking over her

shoulder, eyeing the approaching storm. "I just knew I really didn't want to be put in a challenge of having to deal with clouds," she says. The storm, however, had other ideas.

"Finally I thought, 'Oh just forget this!' So I wiped off the canyon picture I had been painting. I turned my easel and started painting that cloud scene. What happened to me



Song of Summer, oil, 22" by 30"

"I live for monsoon season and the music of the storms. I was so inspired by this cloud. With gorgeous colors and shapes being enhanced by the rumble of thunder, it made it to my canvas. I placed it in a valley scene, creating a place of peacefulness."

sonal life. It has opened many doors for her, including the doors to the Museum of Western Art in Kerrville, Texas. That came about in 2021 when the folks at the museum reached out to her.

"They wanted 10 Christian artists, who paint skies, to do a show in 2022," Gooch says. "This was so cool, and I agreed to participate. That has probably been one of the highlights of my career."

That show—The Heavens Declare! Celebrating the Glory of the

Skies—was a huge success in more ways than one. Gooch's paintings sold out, but more important than that was the bond established between the museum staff and the artists. A few months later, she earned the Kerrville Museum Director's Choice Award.

"To win that award totally blew my mind," she says. "Kerrville has

been so good to me that I can't do enough to thank the people at the museum." So, despite rarely giving

in-person workshops these days, when the folks at the museum asked her to conduct a four-day workshop last spring,

she readily agreed.

Although Gooch taught in-person workshops for many years,

"What happened to me that day changed my destination."



Age to Age, oil, 15" by 28"

"Sunsets at the Grand Canyon can be hypnotizing, as the glow in the sky influences the majestic walls. This display of clouds created sunrays blasting upward while blanketing the canyon with beauty. I knew it had to become a painting."

which provided her a decent income, the pandemic stopped them cold. At first, she thought the quarantine would only last a few weeks. When it didn't let up, she felt as though she were in a do-or-die situation. Her husband had retired from Signtastic, his sign business, in 2017, and she needed to think of something fast. "I didn't want to go out and get a job; I've been an artist all my life," she says.

So, Gooch did what any intrepid problem-solver does these days—she turned to YouTube for help in establishing online workshops. "I developed a really good relationship with YouTube until two o'clock in the morning, night after night after night," she says. "I had to research to find out what platform to use. Then I had to learn to edit my own videos and upload them and just do everything."

Seven months later, Gooch launched her online workshops under the label Masterful Painting. Not only has it been a huge success, she discovered that she loves teaching online. Each year, she also conducts an in-person workshop at the Scottsdale Artist School.

Asked if she has a favorite among her paintings, Gooch's response is immediate. "*Hallelujah!*" she says. "It's [my son] Seth's *Hallelujah!*" In 2019, Seth developed a brain tumor that he fought for a year before undergoing an 18-hour surgery. Gooch had been working on a painting for an exhibition at the Booth Western Art Museum in Cartersville, Georgia, when Seth landed in intensive care. She and her daughter-in-law Madisyn hovered near his bed for seven days.

On the eighth day, Gooch was compelled to finish the painting she

had been working on. As she applied the final touches, she received news that Seth had been released from intensive care, and she titled the painting *Hallelujah!* That painting went on to earn the Memorial Award of Excellence in an American Women Artist show at the Booth Museum and earned the Purchase Award and Best of Show Award at the 2021 Cowgirl Up! at the Desert Caballeros Western Museum in Wickenburg, Arizona.

That painting is a visual anthem that celebrates Seth's recovery and Gooch's faith. She couldn't be more pleased with its new home. 

Mary Nelson lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



The Golden Hour, oil, 15" by 28"

"This was a beautiful evening sunset over the Grand Canyon on the east side. I could not resist that last light. The warm glow and soft clouds made for the perfect combination."



Hallelujah, oil, 30" by 40"

"Hallelujah! depicts a thunderstorm building across the plains of Kansas. This piece was painted during a very traumatic time for my son Seth. In the midst of finishing this piece, the situation with which my son was contending changed. Through tears and brush strokes, the words from my mouth were a continued stream of 'Hallelujahs!' in honor of my son, recognizing that by faith, great battles are won."