



Reimagining the **LANDSCAPE**

Contemporary American painters bring fresh ideas and techniques to a classic art form.

By Edward M. Gomez

What is it about the shape, character and look of the land that has long inspired artists to capture it for posterity on paper, canvas and even cave walls? (Archaeologists date some of the earliest depictions of animals on the land, found in caves in south-central France and in Spain, to the Paleolithic era from 35,000 to 8000 B.C.) In our time, artists in Europe and the United States have created landscapes with more than traditional aesthetics in mind. Some of their works are critical of the effects of pollution and civilization's use of the earth, water and air. Though their works may eschew momentary art-world trends, they have found keen audiences that appreciate their enduring artistic, philosophical and inspirational values.

Valentina DuBasky nourishes her art through travel. Among her itineraries: the legendary Silk Route from Italy to Asia. Recalling ancient cave-wall drawings and fossils and suggesting what she calls "futuristic plant forms" and an air of "magic realism," DuBasky combines oil paint, wax and collage to conjure gardens of brightly colored forms on canvas. Metaphorically, she explains, she is "attracted to nature as a map for the human journey." Paths figure prominently in her paintings as do accidental marks and textures that result from her hot-wax, encaustic technique. Her pictures evoke cycles of vegetative decay and rebirth and the life-shaping passage of endless time.

If, in their hands, meaningful landscape painting thrives, it may be because, as their art reminds us, an instinctive understanding of its power and expressiveness occupies a special place in their hearts.