

So I've taken up painting!

Last year, when my daughter left for college I decided to take my very first painting class. My dear friend, [JoAnn Augur](#), a talented artist notified me of classes she was teaching in acrylics. I didn't know what brushes to buy or paints to use, but JoAnn provided a beginner's list of supplies. I've never taken a painting class before but how bad could I be? Plus it's never too late to learn something new, right? ...a nervous sigh...

So, equipped with my tubes of paints, clean brushes and my new plastic carrier, I headed to my first class. We all sized each other up-"Is this your first class?" "How long have you been painting?" But we became fast friends, all there for the same purpose-to paint.

The hardest part was learning **how** to paint. Where do you start? Do you paint the background first? The foreground? Which brush? I was anxious because I KNEW everyone else had some painting experience, and I had NONE. But JoAnn is a fabulous teacher and taught us how to really look at shapes, colors, shadowing, perspective and then encouraged us to put our own personalities behind our work. I, on the other hand, have always colored between the lines and never felt the freedom to just let it all go.



But it took only one class to know I was hooked. I felt a bit giddy -would I be able to reach beyond my self-imposed limits and throw creative caution to the wind? What if I was

terrible at this? Well, I learned that you can just paint over a failure or toss it. A class is 3 hours long and a session is 6 to 8 weeks. So far I've taken 3 sessions. When I get home after class, I am like a 2nd grader showing my family my latest creation. Thankfully they are kind with their feedback.

One class, JoAnn instructed us to take off our shoe and paint it. Unfortunately, the shoes I wore to class that day were skanky topsiders that were stained and perhaps even stinky...a little embarrassing. It was the first time I exercised my creative license and painted the shoe without the stains, spots and wear and changed the color from gray to purple. After all, who wears nice shoes to a beginner painting class?



One of my favorite classes was learning about the Master painters and copying their works. I fell in love with Sergei Bongart, a Russian master, who I was unfamiliar with until now. I was so impressed with his use of vibrant colors and chunky brushstrokes.

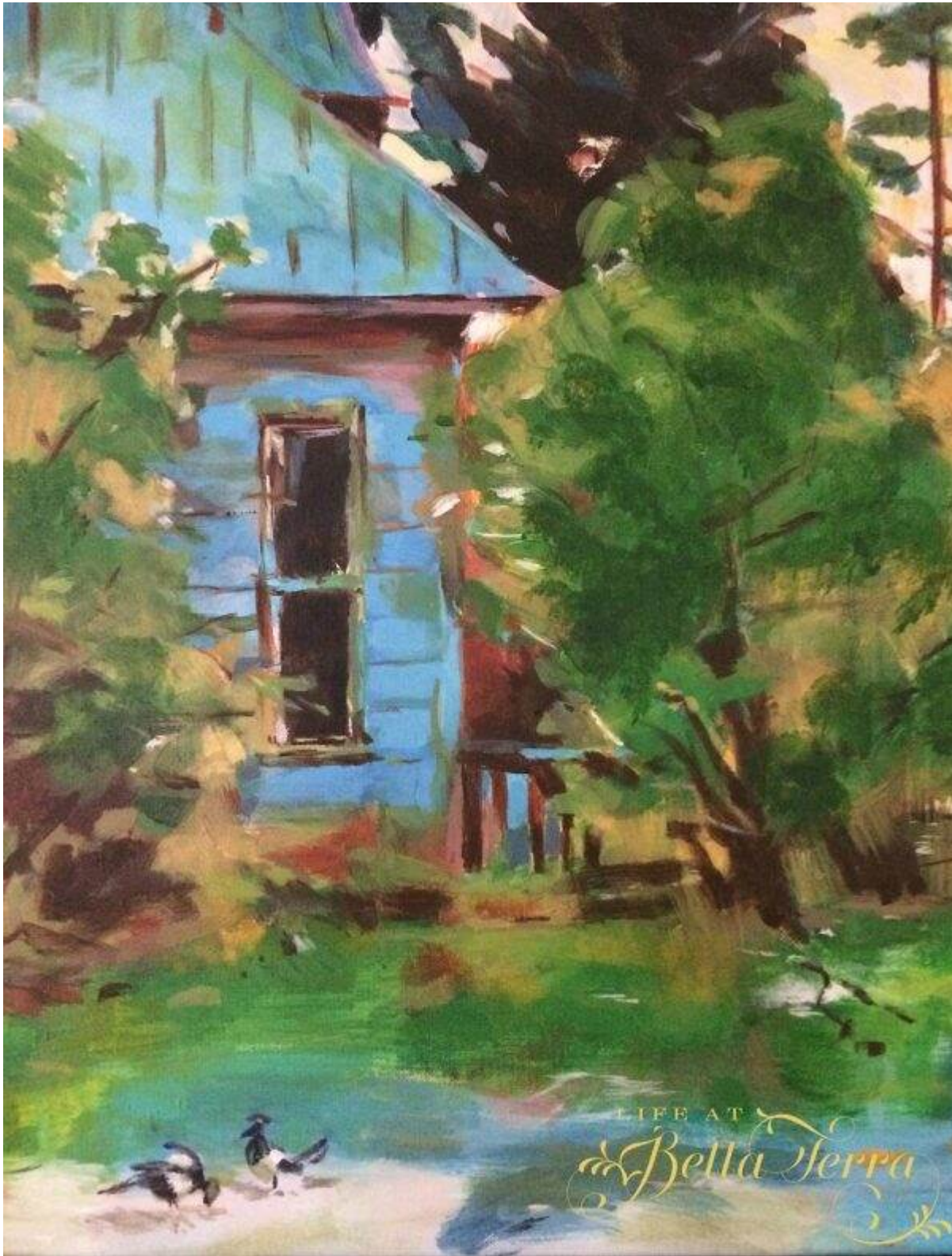


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Here's another Sergei Bongart painting using deep, expressive

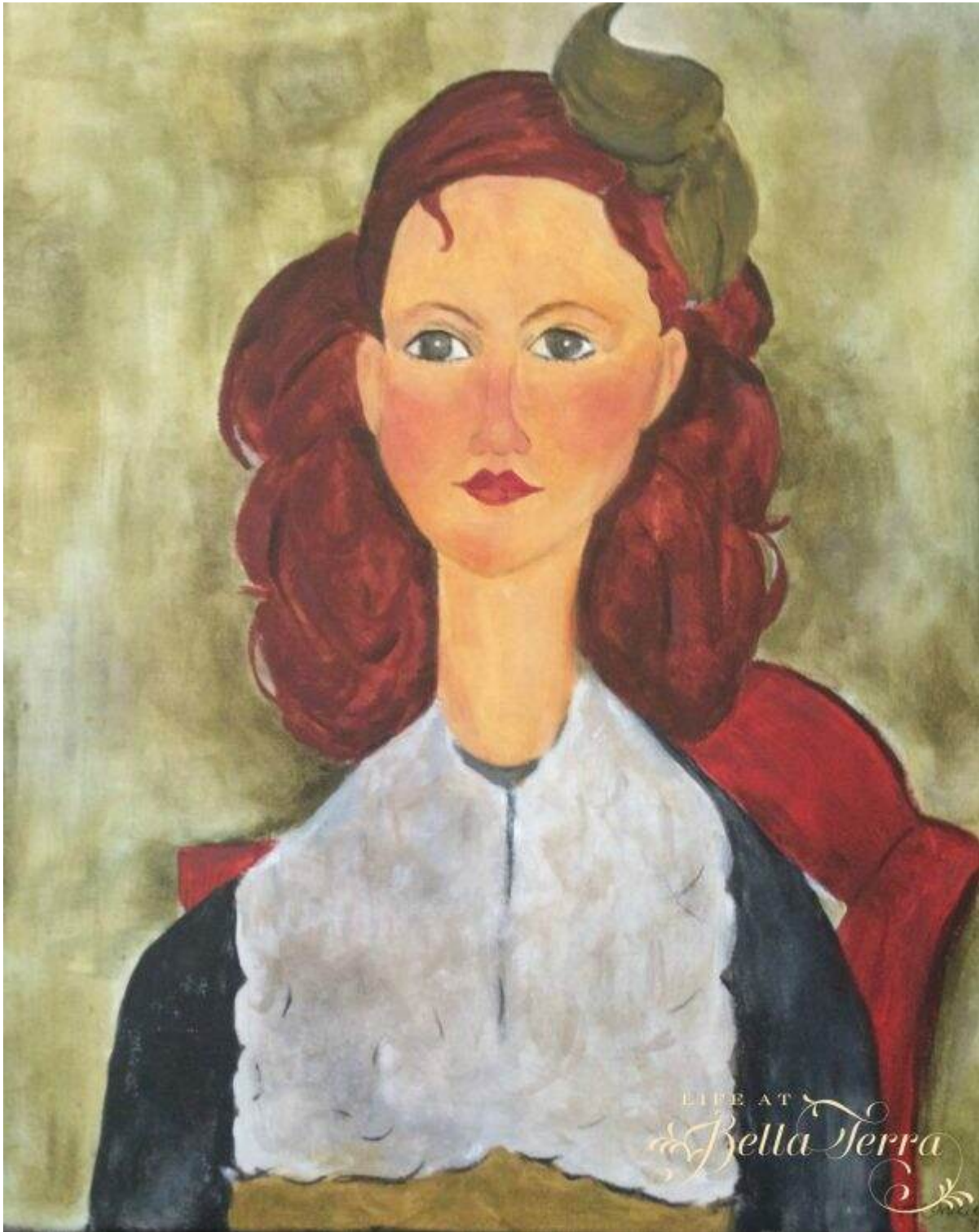
colors. I just love the birds too.





We spent two weeks painting Amedeo Modigliani, whose subjects are known for their elongated necks and figures. It is so hard to capture expressions and paint faces but it was fun to give it a try.





Lastly, I so enjoy the [Miss Mustard Seed blog/website](#) and have coveted the painting of the cow "Eulalie" in her dining room by [Cindy Austin](#). I decided to give it a try and enlarged a picture of it on my computer screen. It was so pixelated and very difficult to replicate. It's certainly not as good as the original, but here it is. Cindy Austin does have the giclee print available online [here](#).



I can honestly say it was a bit intimidating learning something new at this age. The lesson learned is that learning never stops. But once I stepped off the cliff, I have found the experience to be exhilarating. So take the leap and try something you've never done before! You can do it!

Here's some information from my art teacher who gets questions all the time on where to take art classes:

Hopefully we have peaked your interest in learning to paint! The Phoenix area offers many fine art schools. Here are just a few:

For all levels, Studio 6020 at the Studio for Creative Development which is located at 1251 E Northern Ave, Phoenix. Beginning, Intermediate, and Master classes are offered. See www.kathyttaylorart.com or www.joannaugur.com two artists that teach at the studio.

Scottsdale Artists School located at 3720 Marshall Way in Scottsdale. Weekly classes and workshops are available.

Shemer Art Center 5005 E Camelback Rd., Phoenix. Historic building offering a variety of classes from which to choose.

Mesa Art Center located on Main St. in Mesa.

The Artist's Studio at the Farm 6106 S. 32nd St Phoenix.

Happy Painting!!!!