

New England HOME

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*Plunge
Into Spring*

OUTDOOR LIVING AWAITS



Waxing Poetic

Kelly Milukas creates encaustic paintings that become part of the experience of home. BY BOB CURLEY

Kelly Milukas wants patrons to inhabit her paintings the way they inhabit their homes—as part of an experience rather than a static image on the wall. It’s a sentiment that reflects the artist’s background as an event and concert promoter but also the unusual physical depth of her work.



LEFT: *A Beautiful Noise* (2022), 18”H x 12”W, pastel and acrylic.
ABOVE: *Spring Grounds* (2022), 10”H x 10”W, encaustic painting.

A sculptor and painter, Milukas sees encaustics—a form of hot-wax painting that dates to classical civilization—as a blend of both disciplines. Encaustic paintings are known for their dimensionality, texture, luminous sheen, durability, and, perhaps most of all, multiple layers. Some of Milukas’s works feature twenty overlapping brush strokes, each made quickly but thoughtfully before the 200-degree wax cools.

Technique aside, there’s a fun and whimsical element to Milukas’s work that reflects her sunny personality, too. Past projects have included dozens of

“I LOVE TO CELEBRATE THE BEAUTIFUL FEELING OF LIFE.”

—Artist Kelly Milukas



paintings of cows and chickens, for example. “I love to celebrate the beautiful feeling of life,” says the Tiverton, Rhode Island-based artist.

Milukas’s residential commissions tend to be more abstract (after all, not everyone wants a cow in their living room) but include plenty of recognizable references to local landscapes and nature.

Projects invariably start with a visit to the home where the artist takes cues from the interior design and color

palette—and especially the setting, which, in southern New England communities like Tiverton, often means farmland or the coast. Barns are a favorite source of inspiration for Milukas because of their unusual lines, but when translated onto canvas, they become more abstract and less literal. “But you can tell that there are references—it’s not entirely conceptual,” explains Milukas, who’s also the founder of Taste Design’s artist-in-residence program and

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: *Queen of the Mab* (2020), 8”H x 8”W, white line wood carving. *Red Beret* (2012), 18”H x 8”W, pastel and watercolor. *Color Oia* (2012), 14”H x 11”W, pastel and watercolor.



MILUKAS DRAWS THE LINE AT HAVING HER PAINTINGS BECOME MERELY ORNAMENTAL.

its inaugural artist.

Though intent on harmonizing her work with its environment, Milukas nonetheless draws the line at having her paintings become merely ornamental. “My work has to live in that space and have its own voice,” she says.

The challenge of commissioned work is that it must make both client and artist happy, Milukas says. “The hardest

and most wonderful thing is when people come in and say we love your work and make us a painting that works in our home,” she says. “It’s such a gift, but it’s also scary because it gives you so much freedom.”

EDITOR’S NOTE: Kelly Milukas is represented by Four Corners Gallery, Tiverton, R.I., fourcornersgalleryri.com. To see more of her work, visit kellymilukas.com.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: *Blue Earth* (2021), 30" H x 70" W, diptych, encaustic mixed media. Artist Kelly Milukas. *Sachuest Bay* (2022), 10" H x 10" W, encaustic painting.