

# Jill Banks

## Human connections



▲ **The Water Tester**, oil, 12 x 24.

► **Persimmons in the Kitchen**, oil, 20 x 16.



WHEN JILL Banks was a child, her father imparted an indispensable lesson: how to see something in nothing. “Our favorite game was him scribbling the craziest mess possible and having me try to turn it into a picture, person, or animal,” says Banks. “What great practice it gave me in finding shapes, patterns, and reality within the abstract.” Today, in her impressionistic portrayals of people, animals, landscapes, and interiors, the painter leaves behind traces of abstraction for viewers. “I want you involved in the painting,” she says, “filling in the gaps with your own vision.”

Banks credits Rembrandt for showing her that cameras are neither a necessary nor very useful substitute for an artist’s visual memory. For her lean, painterly style, she credits countless hours of plein-air practice. The Fairfax, VA, artist carries her easel in tow on painting trips and to markets, parks, streets, and plazas around northern Virginia. Her itinerary also includes frequent stops at a local dairy farm where she paints the barnyard animals ambling about. “Other

places to paint became favorites because of their inhabitants, not the scenery,” says Banks. “I’m moved the most by life—people first, animals second. I crave company and one-on-one connections.”

The artist ardently explores those connections in her work, as she did several years ago when she set out to paint 100 faces in 100 days. After securing 100 volunteers who would sit for their portraits in her studio, Banks spent hours learning about each participant as she painted him or her from life. “It was the most extraordinary experience—forming a kinship with people of all ages, getting totally new perspectives on life,” she says, “and gaining greater appreciation for acquaintances, friends, and family.”

Even in the artist’s nonfigurative works, her gratitude for those relationships lingers. In her award-winning oil **PERSIMMONS IN THE KITCHEN**, Banks conveys the comforting ambiance of family and home just after Thanksgiving. “My daughter-in-law-to-be was cooking up turkey soup in the pot on the

stove while my husband and son were out golfing,” she recalls. “Later that day, my father-in-law brought over a box of persimmons that replaced a rather dowdy bag of onions on the counter. Even without people within the frame, there’s a sense that they just stepped out for the moment.” —Kim Agricola

### representation

**Artists’ Atelier**, Great Falls, VA, and [www.jillbanks.com](http://www.jillbanks.com).

### upcoming shows

**Telluride Plein Air**, Telluride, CO, June 28-July 4.

**Wickford Fine Art Festival**, Wickford, RI, July 8-9.

**Alexandria King Street Art Festival**, Alexandria, VA, September 16-17.

**Armonk Outdoor Art Show**, Armonk, NY, September 23-24.