

# Elizabeth Lennie's love of water translates on canvas

By **Gwyn McAllister** - May 29, 2019

It's not surprising that artist Elizabeth Lennie is drawn to water subjects.

Lennie

is an avid scuba diver who spends part of every year in Mexico pursuing her passion. What might surprise those viewing her paintings, considering the sophistication of her work, is that she only started painting seriously in 2004. Before then, Lennie was busy pursuing other equally ambitious careers. The Canadian native worked in interior design and as an actress before settling into what she considers her true calling.

Lennie, whose beach and underwater scenes are currently the subject of a solo show at the Eisenhauer Gallery in Edgartown, has enjoyed quite a bit of success in her relatively short career. She is represented by a couple of galleries in Canada, as well as one in Greenwich, Conn. She was also picked up by the Saatchi Gallery, and is one of their artists online.

"I've been really lucky. For some reason my work has resonated," says Lennie. Her work has also clearly resonated with Vineyarders. Last year Elizabeth Eisenhauer introduced her newest artist by showing a handful of her paintings. They all sold out. Given the popularity of Lennie's work, Eisenhauer decided to feature her in a solo show — something the gallerist rarely does. "People are walking in and going straight to the pieces," she says.

Eisenhauer refers to Lennie's work as "abstract/figurative." Although her subjects — swimmers, beachgoers, girls playing on a log in a Canadian river — are

represented quite clearly in an impressionist fashion, the water, sky, and beach are often painted with quick, broad brushstrokes in a painterly, textured fashion,

adding a mood and a design element to the artist's work.

Lennie's genesis as an artist started straight out of high school, when she attended art school in Canada, although there were a few detours along the way.

"I switched to interior design," she says. "I did that for three years, then quit." Her next move was an unexpected one. "As a kid I always wanted to be an artist,

but it wasn't practical," says Lennie, adding with a clear sense of irony, "So I became an actor." She studied at the Neighborhood Playhouse in NYC and, upon her return to Canada, worked in theater as well as film and television.

From there Lennie went on to a successful career as a film and TV actress, appearing in dozens of CBS and Hallmark movies of the week. One of the highlights of her time as an actress was working with Sophia Loren. However, Lennie says that she never really liked acting and, once she'd caught the painting bug, she decided to all but give up her second career (she still does some voiceover work). "Acting and painting are not compatible," she says. Lennie's first success as a painter came quickly, when she rediscovered a series of photos she had taken of kids playing on some logs in the water near her home. She captured the images in oil paintings, and was picked up by a Canadian gallery that quickly sold them all. Eventually one of her images of kids playing shinny (a Canadian term for pickup hockey) was featured on a program for the Toronto Symphony, which led to her discovery by the Hockey Hall of Fame. Lennie calls her scenes "liquid landscapes," and refers to her winter scenes as "liquid landscapes frozen."

"I paint water," she says, explaining that water is a subject that has always appealed to her. She has become an avid scuba diver, which has clearly had an influence on her underwater scenes. Lennie paints every day in her studio in Toronto. "It's not an addiction. It's a purpose," she says, explaining that she has yet to head to her studio thinking of her work as a chore.

"I'm painting the same images over and over again," says Lennie. "Hoping to find a spontaneous shift in my style, because in my heart I'm an abstract painter. I'm trying to get there."