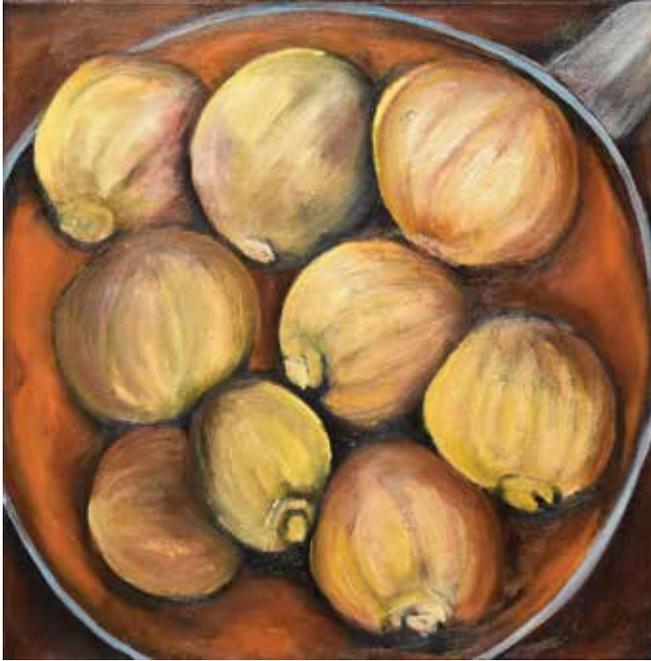
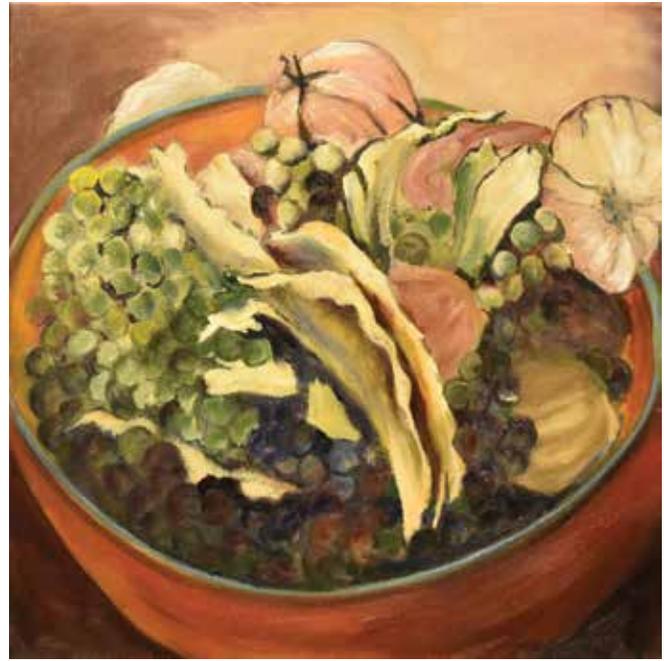


Pauline Sensenig: Stories—Raw and Cooked

November 16, 2019 – February 2, 2020



Onion Sauce, 2011, oil on canvas, 20 x 20 inches



Peas and Garlic, 2011, oil on canvas, 20 x 20 inches

Artists throughout the world have painted the small, common things of daily life for millennia. These things make great models: they are easy to access, can be placed wherever the artist chooses, and once placed, they sit still. The first European still life painting is thought to be *Basket of Fruit* in 1597 by the Italian artist Caravaggio. But the still life genre of painting became enormously popular in Holland during the 17th century. Paintings of flowers, musical instruments, books, porcelain, glass, and other household items appealed to the growing middle class in Holland as reminders of their financial success and as subtle warnings that earthly delights pale in comparison to the experience of eternity in heaven. Artists also used displays of fruits, vegetables, bread, seafood, game, and wine as subjects. For the purchasers of the paintings, the food and beverages served as reminders of nature's bounty while hinting at the inevitable death of all living things.

Of course, in more recent centuries artists have continued to create still life paintings for different reasons. Artists like Henri Matisse, Pablo Picasso, and Georgia O'Keeffe explored color and form. Andy Warhol explored commercialism. Jasper Johns explored the meaning of symbols.

So, a simple still life painting might represent a tasty treat. Or it could represent your ultimate demise. Or it could just be a collection of shapes and colors. Or somewhere in between.

For Pauline Sensenig, her paintings of food would start in earnest after a dinner of homemade Italian food. For a few

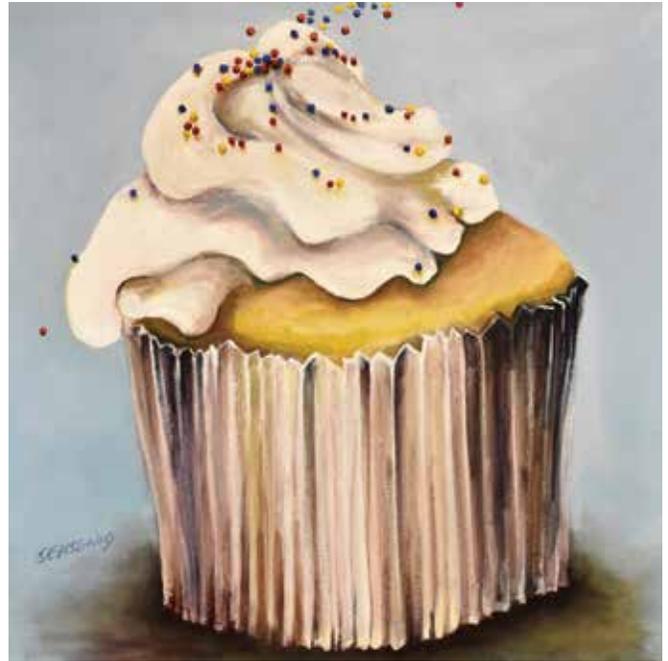
years prior to that dinner, she was occasionally inspired to paint the vegetables that were fresh from the market: tomatoes and potatoes, eggplants and bell peppers, and heads of lettuce and cabbage—the raw ingredients ready for delicious homemade dishes. And she has created still life paintings of clothing, furniture, and plants for many years. But the experience that accompanied that Italian dinner brought a newfound joy to the idea of food as the subject of Pauline's paintings. So, she recreated one of the dishes from the dinner using oil paint on canvas. Over the next couple of years, similar experiences inspired her to create several additional paintings of pasta dishes.

Those paintings led Pauline to draw motivation from similar experiences. Since that first inspirational dinner in 2007, Pauline has turned her artistic eye again and again to food, both raw vegetables and cooked dishes. Behind each individual painting or series of paintings of food has been some form of personal connection to the food. She returned from prepared food to raw ingredients in 2011 with a series of paintings: a bowl of peas and garlic, halved tomatoes with their seeds removed, whole onions, and mountains of potatoes.

The potatoes would lead to three paintings, titled successively *Landscape I*, *II*, and *III*. She painted *Landscape I* directly from an arrangement of different colored potatoes. After spending what seemed like hours peeling potatoes for both Thanksgiving and Christmas meals, Pauline developed a new interest in potatoes as the subject of a painting. After completing the first painting, she decided to experiment with



Tropical, 2015, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches



Sprinkles from Above, 2015, oil on canvas, 24 x 24 inches

the colors, darkening the background and deepening the shadows. And so, she painted *Landscape II*, working directly from *Landscape I*. When the second potato painting was complete, she wanted to try one more version with a greater range of tones. Working from *Landscape II*, Pauline created *Landscape III*.

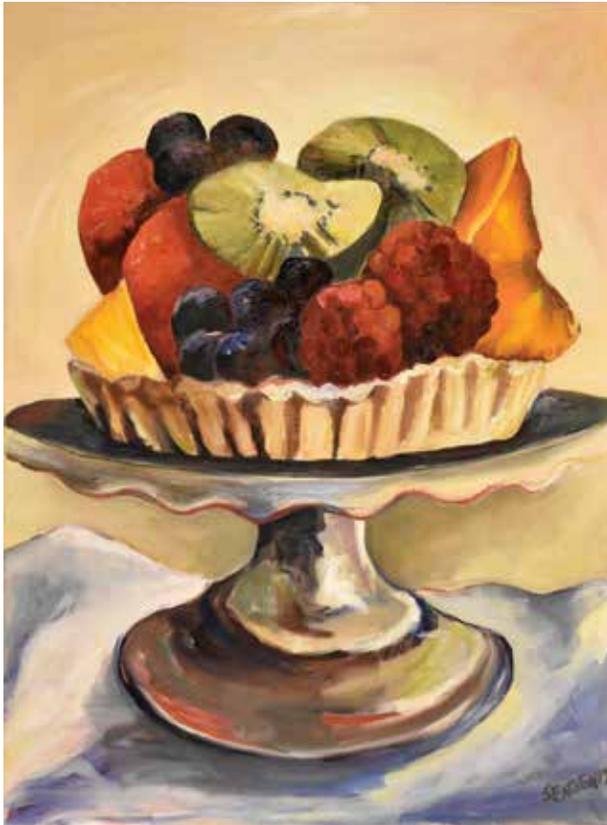
Over the next couple of years, Pauline would return to food as a subject for her paintings. Immense sandwiches, candy, raw vegetables, and French fries would pose for her. She has said that sometimes the food looked so good that she just had to create a painting of it. However, in 2014 she painted a cupcake, which would lead to the largest series of works in this exhibition. Pauline had painted and exhibited a series of portraits of friends a few years earlier. Though she had finished the series, she maintained a desire to begin another series of portraits...but portraits that were more symbolic than representational. It was a cupcake that she plucked from an assortment of leftovers at an art event that played the role of model for a new portrait. Titled *Number One*, the cupcake sits in its foil wrapper with a maraschino cherry set in its deep frosting. The cupcake reminded Pauline of someone, whose friendship guided her as she translated the cupcake into an oil painting.

After completing *Number One*, Pauline returned regularly to a bakery to seek out new cupcakes for paintings. In most cases, she found a connection between each new cupcake and one of her friends. Once she brought the cupcake into her studio, she would modify as necessary either to satisfy

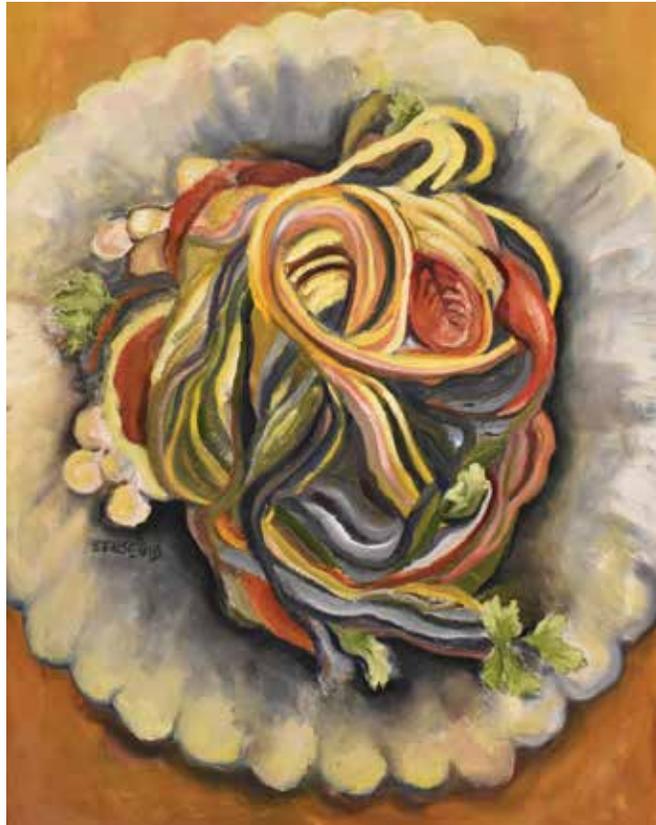
her artistic goals or to bring the cupcake more fully in line with her confectionary interpretation of her friend. The identity of the inspiration behind each cupcake painting remains unknown. Therefore, all of her friends are able to wonder if they are represented by a cupcake, and if so, by which one.

While Pauline has drawn, printed, and painted portraits, landscapes, still lifes, and any other subject you can think of, food has become the most provided her with the greatest variety of artistic challenges and personal connections. This exhibition of many of these paintings from the last decade is a testament to her creativity, whimsy, and her skillful handling of paint. From fresh vegetables to prepared dishes and to her series of much-larger-than-life cupcakes, the food in Pauline's paintings takes on meanings that are beyond that of subsistence or sustenance. They represent poignant moments, friends, and the joy of eating. What better source of inspiration is there?

Pauline Sensenig was born and raised in Illinois. She earned a scholarship to study art at the University of Illinois, but transferred to Bradley University to major in accounting. After she married her husband Larry, they eventually moved to Sioux City in 1974, where she finished her degree at Morningside College. However, she returned to school to add more classes to complete her degree in art. For more than twenty years, Pauline taught printmaking, design, and drawing at Morningside College, and taught drawing and design classes at Western Iowa Tech Community College. She retired in 2012.



Tart, 2008, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 inches
Collection of Brent and Mara Van Ee



Twisted, 2009, oil on canvas, 36 x 24 inches

cover:

(L) *Landscape III*, 2012, oil on canvas, 36 x 28 inches

(R) *French Fries or Ode to David*, 2012, oil on canvas, 40 x 30 inches

The Sioux City Art Center would like to thank the following collectors for lending their paintings for this exhibition:

Doug Batchelor ■ Judith Scherer Connealy and Matt Connealy ■ Michael P. Jacobs
Graham and Emily McGaffin ■ Kathie Petrie and Mark Bowden ■ Brent and Mara Van Ee