

A close-up painting of a face, likely a child's, with a brush applying paint to the eye area. The face is rendered in warm, earthy tones of yellow, orange, and brown. The brush is black with a silver ferrule and is being held by a hand. The background is a vibrant, abstract mix of red, orange, and blue. The overall style is expressive and textured.

# small wonders

A series of booklets published by  
Asplandesign



# 4

No

## Mary



When most of us squeeze a tube, we get toothpaste. Or hair gel. Or skin cream. Mary Zarbano gets splendor. She gets life. She dabs amber onto her palate, then adds red, white. Even before bristles touch canvas, her brush dances artfully, like a conductor's baton, bouncing, blending, a prelude to the symphony of creative expression. Blue, violet, black, indigo. "For me, colors create moods," Mary says. "It's a healing thing. It goes right through you. I'm especially attracted to muted colors. I love grays, different shades of gray. It's like on a foggy day, you see a geranium, and it's just so red against that gray, redder than it's ever been before. It's magic." Is there anything else that could evoke the same depth of emotion? "My daughters," Mary says.



# A

# wild

## little gypsy

Mary Zarbano was 11 when her passion for art first took hold. “It became my life,” she says. “Like breathing.” She grew up in Omaha, Nebraska, the daughter of a Scotch-Irish father and a Sicilian-born mother, the latter of whom arrived at Ellis Island in 1922 and never learned a word of English. “A wild little gypsy,” Mary says with a smile, her eyes darting heavenward. Mary’s mom was 24 and nearly blind when she came to America with her first husband, who died shortly after they arrived. The tiny woman with the raven hair somehow regrouped, remarried and rebuilt her life on the Great Plains. At night, Mary would listen to the prairie wind howl as her mom spun dreamlike tales – part fact, part Sicilian fable. “My mom,” Mary says, “is where I got my artistic talent.”





# &

Picasso  
Chagall  
mother  
daughter



Mothers and daughters often find their way into Mary's paintings. Her works in a recent exhibition at the Sarah Bain Gallery in Brea included "Caro Madre" ("Dear Mother"), depicting a soulful figure with two dark curls holding a child, face half in shadow, half in light. In "Sisters," a tall, slender young woman sits snug beside a girl who holds a mask to her face, a bright red flower in her lap. Mary doesn't like to try to describe her subjects or style. "If I could explain it," she says, "I wouldn't do it." She does acknowledge the influence of Picasso, Chagall, her mom and the intense relationships she shares with her daughters, both of whom suffer from mental illness. "There's no end to the love between a mother and her children," she allows.



# A

At age 72, Mary feels like she's in the prime of her artistic life. After marriage at 17, a move to California, the births of her children and the death of her first husband, she spent most of her adult life as caregiver to her daughters and mother. Still, she found time to earn a master's of fine arts from Cal State Long Beach, teach at Saddleback College and pursue her own creative vision. These days she paints in the warm light of a 1,600-foot studio in La Palma, assisted by her husband, Ned Schultz, who used to buy her paintings and is still her biggest fan. She exhibits in galleries in Taos and Aspen as well as Southern California. The childhood spark still glows. Like a geranium against a field of gray.



geranium

against a field  
of gray.



SARAH BAIN GALLERY

MENT  
OF THE SIN

number

4

# Mary 2003

The Asplandesign Chronicles are published to showcase the creative talents of Asplandesign, CE Specialized Communications and Sasaki Photography. For additional copies, please contact Kurt Aspland at 714 738 5587.

All photography is used by permission and is copyright 2002 Russel Sasaki.

Design  
Copy Writer  
Photographer

Asplandesign  
Dennis Arp  
Sasaki Photography

714.738.5587  
714.257.9211  
714.540.2433

kaspland@asplandesign.com  
cecomm@mindspring.com  
sasakiphoto@earthlink.net