

## Patricia Watwood, Contemporary Classicist

By Pat Aubé Gray

Sewing machine whirring as she finishes a Halloween costume princess cape, successful



*Semele*, 36" x 24"  
oil on canvas with gold leaf

artist Patricia Watwood, mother of two, expresses, "Having young children is a blessing. You can't postpone it until your career is established."

Born in St. Louis, Missouri, Watwood was enrolled in art classes throughout her childhood. She graduated *Magna*

major in Theatre (Scenic Design), and a minor in Art and Art History. Watwood moved to Seattle, Washington where Tony Ryder introduced her to traditional figure drawing and painting at The Academy of Realist Art. She knew then this would be her life's work.

Watwood and her husband moved to New York in 1996 for the artist's study at New York Academy Graduate School of Figurative Art and to work privately with Jacob Collins. On an eight-month sabbatical she attended the *Ecole Albert Defois* in Les Cerqueux sous Passavant in France with artist Ted Seth Jacobs. Watwood earned her Masters of Fine Art Degree in 1999.

With work in major exhibitions in notable museums and galleries throughout the United States, Watwood has twice won the James Amster Memorial Award from the National Arts Club in New York. In 2004 she and ten other artists were invited by *American Artist* and Forbes, Inc. to participate in *The Next Generation of Realists*,

spending ten days in London painting, exchanging ideas, and visiting museums.

The first woman commissioned to paint a portrait for University Hall at Harvard University, Watwood unabashedly composed her painting of Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin after Vermeer's *The Astronomer*. Payne-Gaposchkin, a mother of three, was the first person to receive a Ph.D. in astronomy from Harvard and the first woman to receive tenure there.



*Cecelia Payne Gaposchkin*,  
47" x 38", oil on canvas,  
University Hall, Harvard University

Leaning toward narratives and allegories and exploring classical mythology, she is painting in a higher key with a more colorful and modernistic intention than the Old Masters whose work she reveres. Watwood's style has evolved since her training, bringing a contemporary sensibility to her realistic compositions. She explains, "I want people to know my paintings are being executed *now*."