



Jennifer Lanzilotti

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Artist Statement

My journey as an artist began only eight years ago. Before that, I had never painted with acrylics. A friend invited me to a paint and wine class, and I discovered how much I enjoyed painting. Not long afterward, fallen leaves landed on my car. Because I have always loved nature, I looked at them and thought, *Why not use a leaf as my canvas?* That simple idea began my journey as a self-taught artist.

Every piece I create is painted on a real leaf that has naturally died and fallen from the tree. I collect them in the fall while hiking, always looking for leaves that are beautiful, intact, and not too damaged by the elements. I wash, dry, and press each one before painting it. Collecting fallen leaves is important because living leaves still contain moisture and active enzymes that cause them to break down. Once properly dried and pressed, leaves can last an incredibly long time. I even read once about a pressed leaf that was around 200 years old!

My exceptionally large leaves are especially rare and are priced higher for that reason. In seven years of collecting, I have only found leaves that large on rare occasions. Seasonal weather and growing conditions may play a part, but the leaf also has to survive wind, rain, insects, and decay, then press successfully. Finding one that is both enormous and paintable is truly special.

My love of hiking and nature inspires many of the landscapes I paint. My leaf art has been featured on **Detroit PBS's *Detroit Performs*, Season 9, Episode 1**, displayed in galleries, hospitals, local businesses, and shops, and purchased by collectors around the world through my Etsy shop.

Before becoming an artist, I was a writer. I earned my Bachelor's degree in Social Work, which gave me a foundation in understanding people, relationships, and life experiences that later helped shape my writing. I am the author of three fast-paced action adventure romance novels, *Chicory Island*, *Heal Me*, and *Healed*. I originally wrote them with my daughter, who has ADD, in mind, creating shorter, engaging stories that keep moving without pages of unnecessary description. They are available online wherever books are sold, and my artwork is featured on their covers.

I also created *Just Write, A Lined Journal with Original Artwork*, featuring my leaf art. I use mine for Scripture writing, but it can be used for journaling of any kind and is available on Amazon.

Every leaf has already lived one story before I find it. My privilege is to give it another.