

BRETT SMITH • COLLECTING ON A SHOESTRING • JUDGING ART

WILDLIFE ART

Volume XXI No. 5

September/October 2002

A Legacy of
SPORTING ART

ARTISTS
Lured by the Land

ORIGAMIDŌ:
A New Dimension
in Origami





Landscape Artists LURED BY THE LAND

BY MARY NELSON

From top:
*Spring Thaw
on the Colorado*,
oil, 24 x 48",
by Dix Baines

Snow Falling,
oil, 20 x 30",
by Dix Baines

Pink and lavender fingers of clouds stretching lazily across a shimmering morning or evening sky may stop you short to gaze in awe. Throw in a mountain or a body of water surrounded by lush greenery or crystalline winter beauty and you'll likely stand transfixed, oblivious to the passage of time, as the sun rises or sets. If you happen to be a landscape artist, however, you'll probably scramble to capture the moment

on canvas before the fickle light fades, transforming the opalescent clouds to white or gray.

Artists who paint landscapes cite sundry reasons for doing so. In reality, the lure of the land is to artists what sirens were to sailors. Although the artists we showcase on the following pages differ in media and styles, their main reason for depicting landscapes is the same. Something about the setting or a vista beckons and they respond, unable to ignore that which commands their artistic attention.

Dix Baines, Denver, Colo.

OIL

Dix Baines doesn't merely paint landscapes; he makes dramatic statements about what catches his eye. According to Baines, his oil renderings of certain panoramas are commentaries on "the passage of light, the mass of a mountain, the steadfastness of architecture and what it says about the hands that made it."

The Colorado artist says he gave up his interior design position with a top hospitality design firm in Denver five years ago because, "the outdoors seemed a much more attractive office than my cubicle." In 1995, he started taking lessons at the Art Student's League of Denver under the tutelage of Quang Ho and Kim English. As the lessons pro-



gressed, his style took hold. "Style's a funny thing," Baines says. "Early attempts are really trying to emulate or copy a master's style. It's a good way to learn, but I was never really satisfied with the result." He finally realized that style is the sum of an individual's experiences, and that recognition lets him pour his excitement, emotions and thoughts into his art.

Any landscape is fair game to Baines, who commits to canvas sights and impressions from his travels. His paintings are sprinkled with architecture and geographical images — "churches, the guy selling coconuts, humble laborers" — that he says aren't always expected in landscapes. "I find my location sketches more exciting than studio paintings, because you capture a sequence of light passages as opposed to a still window of light as seen in a photograph," he says.

Painting *en plein air* is enjoyable to Baines, because "It's by far the most difficult to do. There are so many things you can't control," he says. He frequently uses his plein-air paintings (often the ones he believes have failed miserably) as reference for studio paintings, because they connect him to the emotions and color mixes of the day more accurately than a photograph does. Painting in oil fulfills his need to re-create those impressions. "Oils allow me to achieve transparent darks," says Baines. "You can have light bouncing off the canvas surface in darks. I mix a tonalist approach — I like a dominant tint on my canvas before I start painting — with an impressionistic approach. I'm high-key with color, and oil helps me achieve that [intensity]."

Michael Ferguson
Renton, Wash.

OIL AND ACRYLICS

"For me, landscapes are the most consistently inspiring subject to paint," says Washington artist Michael Ferguson. The self-taught artist admits his style varies, depending on his mood and the view before him. "Sometimes my style is broken, abstract, representational; other times, it's softer, more impressionistic. But it's always [a matter of] applying chunks of color in stripes, slabs or dabs to create an impression of reality."

Initially inspired by landscapes as a child hiking with his parents, Ferguson has painted landscapes professionally for 13 years. Although he paints the Cascade Mountains more often than anything else, his interest also includes cityscapes and seascapes. "I like painting it all," he says. "I'm kind of opportunistic. If my family goes to Alaska, I return and paint Alaska ideas."

Even though he paints *en plein air* (using oils) and in the studio (using acrylics), Ferguson claims his studio paintings as his most original work. "When you're in the field, the [paintings] become more similar," he explains. "You're working outside under changing conditions. Those physical limitations force you to paint more 'gesturally.'"

Ferguson takes photographs to trigger ideas and as a resource. "I have thousands of photographs just for a mood, some are for the design aspect, some may be of a pile of brush I liked," he says. The

photographs are not color references, however. "To me, color is secondary," Ferguson explains. "The main thing that communicates the scene is the drawing and the value study." Impressions and memories of color come from his outdoor paintings.

Mostly what Ferguson wants people to see in his paintings is a fresh, inspiring vision of a classic, beautiful scene. "I want people to see that the painting is of a certain place. But then I want the landscape to break apart into interesting artistic aspects," he says, noting that his style has a hint of unpredictability, a little flex, that adds excitement to his art.

Margaret Hall Hoybach
Charleston, S.C.

WATERCOLORS

Finally fulfilling a 30-year dream, Margaret Hall Hoybach recently completed a book, *Colors of France: A Painting Pilgrimage*. Written as a travel

From top:
Island Rim,
acrylic, 48 x 65",
by Michael Ferguson

Cedars and Firs,
acrylic, 48 x 56",
by Michael Ferguson



Howard Mandel Gallery, Kirkland, Wash.



Howard Mandel Gallery, Kirkland, Wash.