Newsletter

Spring 2008

Watercolor Honor Society

Watercolor USA Honor Society is dedicated to focusing national attention on watercolor painting through exhibitions, educational opportunities and the recognition of artists working in watermedia.

"Subliminal" by Robert Mejer is currently on display in the WHS Travel Exhibition at the Art Center at Falbrook through March 16, 2008.

Membership Dues

It is not too late to pay your membership dues. Members who pay dues after January 31st may not receive both spring and fall newsletters or be eligible to exhibit in Watercolor Now!

WHS Membership Dues Form:

Date:

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Phone:

E-mail:

Annual Dues: $40 **Checks payable to: WHS**

Mail to: Wayne Conyers, Treasurer
1603 Jody Lane
McPherson, KS 67460

WHS Calendar

WHS Calendar

- ASAP: Send dues to be able to participate in Watercolor Now!
- February 3 - March 16: Watercolor USA at Fallbrook.
- February 15: Members may submit an entry form with one non-returnable slide or one digital image on CD-Rom of work to be exhibited in Watercolor Now! 2008 to the Springfield Art Museum.
- March 21: Receipt of framed artwork for Watercolor Now! at the Springfield Art Museum.
- April 1: Last day for receipt of slides or CD and related entry materials for Watercolor U.S.A. 2008.
- April 25: Artists' reception of Watercolor Now! 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
- April 26: Exhibition of Watercolor Now! Opens at the Springfield Art Museum.
- May 8: Last day for receipt of accepted entries for Watercolor U.S.A. 2008.
- June 6: Watercolor U.S.A. exhibition Reception 5:30 – 7:00 p.m.
- June 7: WHS meeting for Board and members starting at 9:00 a.m. at Springfield Art Museum, 1111 E. Brookside Drive. WHS annual dinner at 7:00 p.m.

ARA LEITES

Ara Leites lived for six years in Cuernavaca, Mexico. It was in the Ciruelo (plum) restaurant in Tepoztlan that she found the chair image that figures importantly in her work. As the Ciruelo series developed, the chairs became dominant, and the table disappeared, except as an abstracted form in the negative spaces of the composition. The tiled floor of the restaurant turned into a checkerboard device for decorative elements or transitions.

Memory of Sadness

These representational paintings "are the work of independent witness and the struggling effort to connect the visible to the invisible, to find the secret meaning of places and things. An arrangement of chairs can symbolize the past, present, or future; regret or hope."

"I, as a person, have become the chair in some of the paintings in this series. The chair may also represent a person who has moved through my life. . .The color of the chair can be reflective of a memory related to a time period or an experiential state, like Hot Clique, where the chairs might represent a group of women since they are warm colors; the title could indicate selectivity in their choice to be together."

Along with the Ciruelo series, Leites is working on an experimental series of abstract images. Here she can work out new approaches to media and ideas that arise in other paintings.

One interesting feature of her work is a photo transfer process derived from Robert Rauschenberg, which she learned in graduate school. "It works best on raw watercolor paper but you have to have the composition worked out for the best placement. You can transfer the photo to tracing paper by passing the tracing paper through a photocopying machine. This process will also let you enlarge your photo. Or you can transfer the image to paper by using a felt-tip blender pen. The blender pen only works with xerox copies because the solvent in the pen activates the copier ink. You tape the image face down on your paper, then use the blender pen on the back in small areas, rubbing it with a folding bone or metal spoon before it dries. Do this in a well-venilated room, because the pen solvent is quite strong.

Spring Planting

"A drawback to using tracing paper is that you have to glue it to your painting, and this is difficult to manage without wrinkling. But it does allow previously applied color from beneath to show through, and, because the image is black and white, transparent glazes can be applied on top, which is the primary way I work with acrylics anyway."

Another technique Leites uses is to inlay pieces of old paintings into a current work. "I've always tried to maintain a level of picture plane integrity where I've decided that actual collage pieces would change the physical dimension of the painting surface, especially thick papers. Using inlays means that the surface of the paper stays the same level; I'm right at the edge of my tolerance using very thin tracing paper glued to the paper when I have decided I really wanted a photo image to enhance the content or idea of the piece I'm working on." Leites places the piece to be inlayed on top of the painting, and cuts around the shape with an Exacto knife. After removing the cut piece from the original painting, she turns the painting over, places the inlay into the cleared space, and attaches it using hinging tape or rice paper and YES glue. Sometimes she uses transparent modelling medium to fill in the seam between the two pieces.

Leites is from Ohio, and has a BFA and MFA from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. After graduation she taught high school art in Florida. She has lived in New York state and Mexico, and now teaches at a private high school in Santa Cruz, California. She is a signature member of many watercolor societies, her work appears in a number of "best of" books, and she has been a frequent finalist in *Artists' Magazine* competitions.

Ara is the last three letters of her name, Barbara. "In grad school, I didn't get into shows with my 'female' name, or so I thought, but did with ARA. So kept that going."

TONI ELKINS

Besides being a noted painter, Toni Elkins has a variety of interests and accomplishments. She is an options trader. She has a private pilot's license. She graduated from the Gemology Society of America with a degree in diamond grading. Her line of one-of-a-kind jewelry was sold throughout the country by Saks Fifth Avenue. She designed menswear. She has been active in cultural and philanthropic causes, serving on numerous theater boards and cultural councils throughout South Carolina, as co-chair of Artists Against AIDS, as a fund-raiser for museums and Girl Scouts. She was President of the South Carolina Watercolor Society.

"I feel that giving back to the community which has been so good to me is a duty and an obligation–not a choice!"

She is a signature member of 18 watercolor societies, and has won more than 150 national awards. Among her influences she lists Picasso, Miro, Andrew Wyeth and Norman Rockwell, as well as South Carolina artist Guy Lipscomb, and Mary Todd Beam.

Her paintings are lively and mysterious, and there generally seems to be a story behind them. "Hot dogs (people who feel superior to others) can float outside of our world instead of being around us. The 'good ones' always win in the end, and love conquers all. Those are my dreams."

She doesn't explain too much about her paintings, which usually come from "a tough or involved subject." GOTCHA, for instance, "developed from a doctor who broke into my home–took all my jewelry–and I figured it out–and helped put him in jail." SPEAKING A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE came from having a large fountain built one summer. Elkins trusted the builder, had a signed-off photo of the fountain she wanted–and came back from a trip a week later to find a totally different fountain. After a discussion, the builder constructed the right fountain on top of the wrong one. The viewer may not discover all this background by looking, but Elkins' meaning animates the imagery.

Gotcha

The meaning of the paintings emerges as she works. She likes to underpaint, and then add layer after layer. "I don't know where the top will be." As the painting progresses, she develops "a true-life story." She uses whatever medium she feels like that day, and particularly likes marks made with kitchen tools (she also loves to cook.)

Toni Elkins lives in Columbia, South Carolina, and notes that she was the first artist from that state admitted to the Watercolor Honor Society.

ELLEN MURRAY is the 2008 juror for the Michigan Watercolor Society Exhibition at the Ella Sharp Museum of Art and History in Jackson, Michigan. In conjunction with the exhibit, she will teach a one-day workshop "Watercolor Without A Paintbrush: Old Tools and New Materials" April 5, 2008 at the Ella Sharp Museum. On Sunday, April 6, 2008 she will also give a lecture about her work.

Ellen was also selected as one of 3 national judges for the 2008 Winter Park Sidewalk Art Festival in Winter Park, Florida. The Festival is one of the largest in the country.

In work related to water as subject, she recently completed 3 short educational videos about the 1966 Flood in Florence, Italy that damaged so much priceless art and the efforts to restore it. The videos are The Cimabue Crucifix: The Most Important Victim; Angels of the Mud; and Santa Croce: A Story of Restoration. The videos may be viewed at:

http:// www.asu.edu/arizonaglobalarts/ or http://www.operadisantacroce.it/ click on "Alluvione."

Watercolor Honor Society

The following is a list of active members whose dues were paid by February 1, 2008. Active and inactive members will receive this spring 2008 newsletter publication. Any member who has not paid membership dues by June 1, 2008 will be removed from the membership list and will no longer receive newsletters or have the opportunity to exhibit art in any WHS sponsored events until dues are paid. If you feel your name has been erroneously left off of the list please contact Morgan at 1.580.362.3611.

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Springfield, MO 65804

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Atascadaro, CA 93423

Barbara Baum
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Albuquerque, NM 87111

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Canton, MI 48187

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Wayne Conyers
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Sonoma, CA 95476

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Janesville, WI 58546

Harold Gregor
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Bloomington, IL 61701

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Chicago, IL 60607

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Ardythe Jolliff
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Watercolor Honor Society

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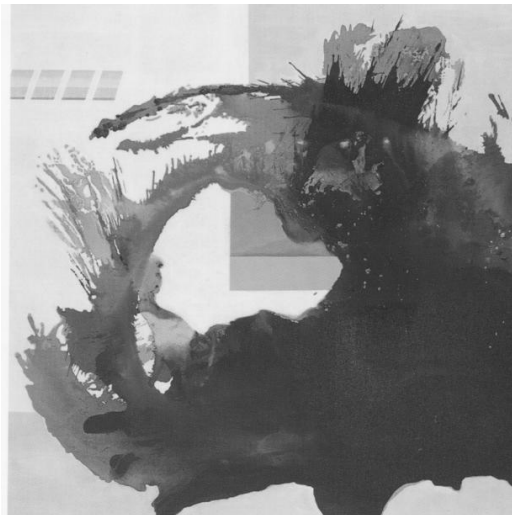
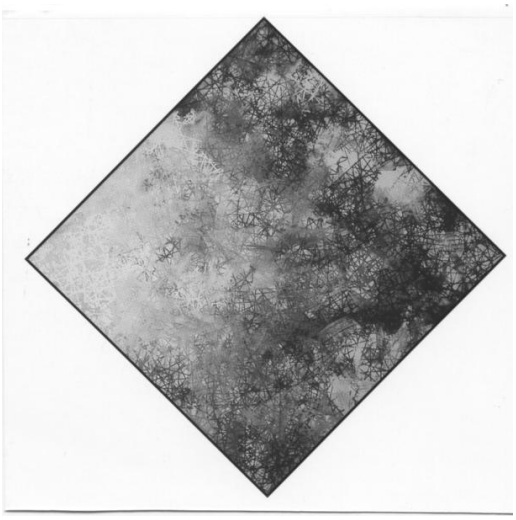
EXCHANGE SHOW WITH JAPAN

Our exchange with the Japan Watercolor Federation has now been scheduled, thanks to the work of board members Hiroko Shikashio and Kenji Nishikawa. The first part of the show will be in 2009, when the Japanese Watercolors will be shown at the Springfield Art Museum. In 2010, paintings by WHS members will be exhibited in Tokyo.

Our paintings will be a standard size–15" x 22" half sheets–and submitted unframed. They will be framed temporarily for display in Japan, just as the unframed Japanese works will be framed in the U.S. This avoids difficulties with shipping and customs, as does the condition that paintings will not be for sale.



Hiroko Tdakuma JWF



Atsuhiko Sakai JWF

Kenji writes; "The Japan Watercolor Federation was founded in 1940, and now has over 300 members. It functions as an honor society, since membership is by invitation. The selection of members has the goal of promoting the evolution of fresh, contemporary watercolor painting in Japan. The organizational structure consists of 28 regional and prefectural branches. The JWF is one of two major watercolor societies presently in Japan.

"Americans' idea of Japanese painting is probably of sumi-e and ukio-e paintings and woodcuts, particularly those done by Utamaro, Hokusai, and Hiroshige during the Edo period. These were the works that influenced French impressionists such as Degas and Monet. Today, however, watercolor artists in Japan create paintings that are bold and contemporary, as well as being rooted in a thousand years of Japanese tradition."

"You are welcomed and encouraged to visit the show in Tokyo."

BOOKS: A Review by Howard Kaye

Waterton: Brush and Pen • Paintings by Brent R. Laycock • Prose by Fred Stenson

Fifth House/ Fitzhenry & Whiteside $29.95

This book is an album of landscape paintings by Brent Laycock, a watermedia painter in Calgary, Alberta. His work is representational, with a lot of flash and verve, and is probably better known in Canada than the U.S.

The paintings are mountain and foothill scenes of the neighborhood of Waterton National Park, which is what Glacier National Park turns into on the other side of the Canadian border. The artist provides an introduction and captions, and the book includes some agreeable essays–personal, geographical, historical–by Fred Stenson, in an effort to broaden its appeal beyond fans of painting.

Laycock's work offers an interesting approach to the balancing act with which many of us are familiar, between describing the subject and having fun slathering on paint. His loose, abstracted style manages to convey a lot of geological and botanical information. He writes: "I use these pieces of subject matter, the skies, mountains, fields, and trees, as reasons to make some marks on the canvas or paper. Once these marks have been established, the process of painting has begun, and the accurate depiction of the subject matter has very little to do with the success of the painting. There is something exciting about watching the paint flow from the brush, especially when accidental things happen, when colours drip and run into each other or spread out in unpredictable liquid patterns. . . The challenge is to walk the narrow line between serendipity and careful drawing."

The serendipity is particularly evident in the transparent watercolors, which comprise less than a third of the illustrations, the rest being acrylics. The watercolors tend to be more simplified and abstracted than the acrylics, and they seem to me the highlights of the book. Laycock can suggest landscape features with a few deft strokes and blobs.

For painters interested in landscape, I think his work is worth looking at.

The Golden Years

I am in my golden years, another phrase for getting old, but I am blessed to be an artist. I am seventy-four years young with the same, if not more, vibrancy to my painting as when I was in my twenties. This is especially true being a watercolor painter as at the beginning of every painting we are challenged with that white blank sheet of paper knowing that we are not always in control.

Unplanned, unexpected things happen! Sometimes they are exciting and other times four letter words arrive. Either way, the expectancy of what might happen to that white, blank sheet of paper sends me back to the studio day after day after day.

Another challenge for me is that I am colorblind. I can't tell the difference between reds or greens of the same value. I am often asked about this and my usual answer is that I can read labels very well. But even so, a purple sky or an orange tree still sometimes pop up in my paintings. My wife is my "zoo keeper" and keeps me out of too much trouble. The result of this colorblindness is that I have a spare palette and a very keen eye for values. But I have learned that a red in front of a green will pop out to you colorists (and is used at times to emphasize a point of interest). Because of my acute awareness of values, I have recognized that an overall weakness in shows that I have judged is value appreciation.

Speaking of shows, I have many opinions on many things. But one I want to share with my fellow professional artists is about the judging of art exhibitions. I believe that the judge has an obligation to the public and to the entering artists. The show selected should be well balanced (representative as well as abstract/non-objective), and limited to one painting per artist. Regardless of genre, I believe that paintings must be fundamentally well drawn, and designed with good composition. Reasons: the majority of the viewing public and beginning artists seeing the exhibition take it for granted that what they are seeing is good art, and it should be. The exhibition's other purpose is to encourage artists. The wealth, the selection, should be extended to as many as possible. The awards should also be well representative of the type of paintings selected. I have judged many shows and have tried to have a quality exhibit, showing the public what good art is and also accepting as many artists as possible where quality and space allows. - **E. Gordon West**

E. GORDON WEST

E. GORDON WEST

by Jerry Ellis

Married, with 4 children, and 3 grandchildren, Gordon lives in Salt Lake City, UT, and is now a full time professional artist, having retired from 30 years working for the government. His interest in watercolor begun while he was in high school, and he has seldom let a brush dry since. He received his BS in art at the University of Louisville, and did graduate study at the Chicago Art Institute. He has won nearly fifty awards through the years, and has garnered membership in some of the most prestigious watercolor organizations in the country, including AWS, NWS, TWSA, and WHS, and has conducted workshops for many professional watercolor organizations.

A continuing joy for Gordon is his yearly painting holiday with a small group of men ("The Watercolor Gang") who have been painting together for 36 years. They have traveled to a number of European locations including an outing to Spain. Last year they painted the Texas Hill Country, and followed up with a show in San Antonio. This spring they will be going to North Carolina, and have asked Joe Miller (of Cheap Joe's) to join them.

www.watercolor-online.com/EGordonWest

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Cor. Secretary: Mary Britten Lynch ...mbritlynart@comcast.net

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Sarah Riley.....sariley@semo.edu

Susan Amstater Schwartz.....sas@elp.rr.com

Return Service Requested

Watercolor USA Honor Society
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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A number of events are happening this year. Our Selected Members Exhibition is now showing at the Art Center at Fallbrook, in California, alongside the NWS travel show. For the first time with our member shows, we are producing a color catalog of the exhibition. (Thanks to the hard work and graphic design expertise of Caryl Morgan.) There will also be a color catalog of the Watercolor NOW member show at the Springfield Art Museum. The opening of this show is April 25, 5:30-7:00, if you can make it to Springfield.

If you can't, try to do so a month later, when Watercolor USA opens–June 6. Good luck with your entries. (You may be interested to know that, in any given year, many of the board members are rejected.) Our Honor Society meeting will be this weekend, and if any of you can join us, we will find a fatted calf (or tofu) to offer up.

Elsewhere in the newsletter you will see that our exchange show with the Japan Watercolor Federation is on the schedule. This is another opportunity that comes with your membership in WHS. Don't forget to send in your dues.

Please vote for our new (or generously continuing) officers on the ballot in this newsletter.

I have received some compliments on our website. (watercolorusahonorsociety.org) You can have your painting images included, or update your old images if you wish–instructions on the website.

Design and production of this newsletter we owe to the talented Caryl Morgan, who seems to be doing everything. We hope to enlist a newsletter editor. - **Howard Kaye**

2008 - 2010 WHS Ballot

OFFICERS - Check box or write in name:

- ❒ President: Caryl Morgan
- ❒ Vice President_____
- ❒ Secretary: Rhea Edge
- ❒ Treasurer: Wayne Conyers
- ❒ Membership: Pat SanSoucie
- ❒ Corrresponding Secretary: Mary Britten Lynch
- ❒ Historian: Missie Dickens
- ❒ Newsletter Editor_____

BOARD MEMBERS - Vote for Eight:

- ❒ Howard Kaye
- ❒ Bob Mejer
- ❒ Ellen Murray
- ❒ Kenji Nishikawa
- ❒ Cyndie Peterson
- ❒ Sarah Riley
- ❒ Susan Amstater Schwartz
- ❒ Sandra Schaffer

Mail ballot to:

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