Newsletter

Spring 2013

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.

WHS Calendar

- March 19: Last day for receipt of CD and related entry materials for Watercolor U.S.A. 2013
- April 4: Notification cards mailed for Watercolor U.S.A 2013
- May 2: Last day for receipt of accepted entries for Watercolor U.S.A 2013
- June 7: Exhibition reception for Watercolor U.S.A. 5:30-7:00 p.m., Springfield Art Museum
- June 8: Watercolor U.S.A. 2013 opens Springfield Art Museum
- June 8: WHS meeting of Officers, Board Members and members starting at 9:00 a.m., Springfield Art Museum, 1111 E Brookside Drive. WHS Annual dinner in the evening - restaurant and time to be announced when confirmed.
- Sept 1 - Exhibition closes, 5:00 p.m.

Newletter Editor and Treasurer Position Openings

Any WHS member who would like to participate more in our organization through offering his or her skills as WHS Newsletter Editor-in-Chief, WHS Newsletter Graphic Designer or WHS Treasurer please contact Bob Mejer, WHS President: mejerbob@quincy.edu. You may also directly contact Sandra Schaffer, current WHS Newsletter Editor-in-Chief: lschaffer@kc.rr.com ,Caryl Morgan, current WHS Newsletter Graphic Designer: earthroadgraphics@sbcglobal.net, and Jerry Ellis, current WHS Treasurer: jerry@jerryellis.org for more specific information on what skills and demands these positions require. Our organization relies on the valuable work of volunteers in our membership to keep WHS running smoothly. If you feel you have good writing skills, graphic design skills or are good at keeping accounts please call one of us about one of these positions

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President's Message

Bob Mejer

Dear WHS Members,

My heartfelt New Year greetings to the Watercolor USA Honor Society membership. I wish all of you a healthy, prosperous, creative and productive 2013 year. It has to be good, we made it past 2012.

I regretfully received letters of resignation from both Caryl Morgan (graphic designer/co-editor of WHS Newsletter) and Sandra Schaffer (Newsletter Editor-in-Chief) effective after the Spring 2013 Newsletter. Personal situations in their lives will not allow them to devote the time needed to produce the quality newsletter for WHS. Caryl & Sandra have spent many years devoted to this project and given WHS a "face" for its membership. I can't say enough of the appreciation I have for them, the work they have done, their professionalism and the money they saved for our organization. They will both continue to stay on the Board and Caryl is still willing to produce catalogs for our exhibitions—essential hard copy documentation for our membership.

In recent correspondence with Jerry Ellis I was informed that he accepted the position of Treasurer for only a one year term to give respite to our previous Treasurer-Wayne Conyers, who was exceptional as Treasurer for eight years. I sincerely thank Jerry for taking on this important task, for his diligence in keeping us afloat and helping us with time as we seek a new person for this position.

The WHS Board recently approved funding our **WHS Purchase Award** in the annual Watercolor USA Exhibition, to be selected by the Museum staff. The amount of up to $3000 will be made available to the Museum to Purchase artwork for their collection.

A side note---the Museum is going to change the award structure to include four major cash awards: $3,000, $2000, $1500, and $1,000 (for a Traditional Watercolor). The requirements for the show have been expanded regarding substrates and moving into 3-D. Sounds exciting and accepting of a broader range of water-media as reflected in contemporary society.

Deadline for the Watercolor USA exhibition is 19 March. I hope to visit with each member in attendance and participate in the celebration of your work being juried into this prestigious exhibition at the Museum Reception, 5:30-7:00P.M. on June 7.

Our annual Board meeting will be held at the Museum on June 8, 2013. Members are invited to attend the meeting. We welcome your input.

I leave you with this profound quote by Wassily Kandinsky:

> *"Color is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one or the other purposively, to cause vibrations in the soul."*

Wayne Conyers

Wayne Conyers has served on the WHS Board for a number of years, most recently as Treasurer. He is in his 29th year of teaching at McPherson College; his 16th as Chair of the Visual Arts Department. Despite the responsibilities involved in both teaching and making the numerous decisions required as department chair, he has incredibly found the time to paint. His paintings are highly detailed, creative and exploratory, each often taking one to three years to complete. Many of his works contain a humorous element, connecting strongly with viewers in such a way that they become highly engaged with the imagery. He has won numerous awards for his work, and is considered by many to be one of the top watercolorists in the nation.

1. When did you first realize that you were meant to be an artist?

It had to be when I was in the first grade. As long as I can remember I've been making marks, but this one incident revealed who and what I was. After a unit on "life on the farm" my teacher gave each student some clay and we made farm animals. So I'm looking around and my peers were all making a body shape and attaching legs to their bodies. My thought was that I wanted to do something different so I rolled my clay into a coil and "drew" a picture on my desk of two animals in a barn. My teacher exploded when she saw what I was doing. My parents were called. "Wayne doesn't follow directions!" Instead of being crushed, I remember thinking that my teacher must really have problems. It encouraged me to keep making marks and think that it is good to be unique.

2. As an art professor, what do you feel are some of the most important things you convey to your students?

I want my students to realize that to be successful in any field, find your passion and pursue it relentlessly. The reality is that some artists will find their passion early in their lives while others will find it later in life. Either way, a devotion to being a life-long learner will eventually lead to finding your own artistic voice.
Talent doesn't exist. A person may be visually perceptive, highly creative, and very intelligent, but without embracing process and applying a strong work ethic, nothing worth keeping will happen. Just like student athletes that practice daily to develop their skills and a "feel" for the game, so must art students work often and diligently to improve their artistic and aesthetic sensibilities. Good advice for any artists at any age. Waiting to be "in the mood" to produce work is a dead end. I have to acknowledge the cliche' that being a strong artist is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration is true. Aesthetic insight is only a concept until you make it real. I tell my students that I am offended if someone comments that I am talented. Where I am right now, as an artist and as an art educator reflects 60 years of persistent work. Even when the artistic process seems overwhelming, it has its rewards in the end.

3. What do you consider to be your greatest accomplishments in the world of art?

With regard to my position at McPherson College it would be re-inventing the direction of the arts department. In 2001 the department was on the verge of becoming extinct with only 6 art majors. With the help and support of others, I created a graphic arts major with two different tracks. With the support of the right person to design and implement the program, the program has been successful to the degree that within the past 5 years we have vacillated between 36 and 62 art majors on a campus of less than 600 students. At the risk of sounding arrogant, I should include that I have been named twice as Professor of the Year by the student body. As an artist, though not an easy answer, accomplishments would be inclusion in the Japan exchange show in 2010, receiving Best of Show in national exhibitions four times since 2000, and my first solo show two years ago, including 52 paintings covering a span of 20 years.

4. In what way is painting an exploratory process for you? What do you hope to express to the viewer through your paintings?

My paintings explore the interconnection of communicating meaning while producing visually intriguing imagery. I always begin with a concept (something to say) and then explore several combinations of images to visually make the statement. I am much more interested in pursuing meaning rather than beauty. the challenge is to do this while continually embracing, exploring, and expanding formal elements and principles of design.
My paintings are very self-referential. The roller coaster of life itself has become my subject matter. As I examine my work and reflect on my 60 years of life, I find that the issues in my life and the issues in my paintings have become the same:

- My paintings are obsessively permeated with a very distinct pattern that reflects my belief that all things, seen and unseen, are somehow unified on a higher plane of existence that we cannot comprehend.
- As corny as this might sound, relationships matter. In both life and art, relationships are the most meaningful component.
- Be honest. Be open to new ideas and new avenues, but don't try to be something you're not. My work reflects my obsessive/compulsive tendencies and that's okay.
- To find meaning in both life and my work, giving

attention to detail has become very important. Details define who and what we are.

- Patience and nurturing relationships are at the foundation of my work and my life. Spending hundreds of hours on a painting is enjoyable and fulfilling. Most of my paintings take 1-3 years to produce; I've been married for almost 40 years. What's the difference?
- Humor is a wonderful thing. It has the potential of being a tool for keeping ourselves focused, for emotional renewal, and for not taking life too seriously. If viewers of my paintings become engaged with imagery, look at their titles, and then begin to chuckle, I know we've connected.

5. You have given much of your time to supporting the arts community throughout the years. You obviously feel this is of great importance. Can you talk about this a bit?

No artist produces work in a vacuum, that is unless you have chosen to be an isolated existentialist. Artists have the responsibility to band together to create aesthetic solidarity wherever they live. Whenever possible, local and regional artists need to work in the presence of each other to bond, to support each other, to exchange creative energy, and to become a cohesive group whose members function as advocates for the visual arts and the performing arts.

6. What are the ways that you feel electronic media may be impacting both our culture and the arts either negatively or positively?

On the positive side, electronic media are allowing incredible freedom for artists to explore multiple solutions to visual problems quickly, while still allowing the final decision as to which imagery is most expressive to remain with the artist. My concern is that as the technology gets more sophisticated, art educators at all levels must continue to promote the traditional media - drawing being the most important.

While all of the wonderful contemporary technology is supposed to bring more connection, just the opposite is happening. I see evidence of this on campus every day, such as students texting each other from less than 20 feet away. We are becoming a society that is losing social skills. The need to talk to each other is retreating, as is the development of good writing skills. I have received papers that often use the texting language. Omg! We have the world at our fingertips, but at what cost?

7. You will soon be taking your first sabbatical after teaching many years. You have indicated you are extremely interested in exploring the world of theoretical physics. During this time what will be your approach to exploring the production of artwork with the human perception of our physical environment?

Wayne Conyers - Self Portrait_#2

For several years I have been captivated by the barrage of work related to various forms of theoretical physics. This sabbatical is about taking a personal journey of discovery. There are so many questions that I don't yet know the answer to. Is there any way that I can visually capture the impact of issues within theoretical physics that challenge what is real? Where will this journey take me, and what will be the result? How will I know if I'm "succeeding"? I will immerse myself in the process and respond to thoughts and experiences as they present themselves.

The first step of the journey has already begun, as I gather articles, papers and books that challenge the concepts of absolute vs. relative time, absolute versus relative space, and the qualities of "matter." I am starting with Ernst Mach's work, which should lead me to Einstein's relativity. I need to find more information on the Superstring Theory as well as read about CERN's discovery last year of what is called the "God particle". There are a number of important authors writing in this area, and I foresee intensive reading throughout this spring semester. All research will coincide with painting and drawing; by the end of August the intent would be to be more production than research. The prospect is extremely exciting to me, as I don't know where it will lead me. Will one idea spark a series of future paintings/drawings? My journey will also involve travel, as I believe "place" can be quite influential on both thought and visual perception. Right now I have 6 possible locations, and intend to allow the process to dictate the direction as I continue my work.

I do not see a conclusion to this journey. In fact, it may be a whole new beginning for me personally and inspire future artistic pursuits. Of course I would need to "pause" the journey in mid-January to prepare for classes in the spring semester.

An Interview with Nick Nelson - New Directions

Nick Nelson, Director- Springfield Art Museum

Nick Nelson previously served as Director of the Albany Museum of Art in Albany, Georgia. He received an MFA from Georgia Southern University in Statesboro, Georgia. He also taught drawing and design at Georgia Southern where he directed the University's art gallery, the University summer art camps and Arts Fest, a regional arts festival. Mr. Nelson has exhibited his artwork in venues throughout the country.

Questions:

You and the board have already instituted some changes in Watercolor USA by having the museum offer four top cash awards, making it a show that offers more incentives to enter than almost any other watercolor exhibition in the country. **What was the thought process that went into offering more generous top awards than in the past?**

The changes we are making to Watercolor USA, from restructuring the awards to the new entry requirements are all intended to distinguish this exhibition from others. By offering a higher cash award, we hope that it will attract more attention and encourage more entries. Watercolor is one of the strengths of the Springfield Art Museum's collection. We have been collecting from Watercolor USA for a long time and will continue to use this exhibition as a way to acquire new work. The higher awards will hopefully bring out the very best in the artists entering the show, so that we are exhibiting and acquiring the very best these artists have to offer. It makes the exhibition more prestigious and will hopefully garner more attention from artists and art lovers alike.

You and the board are also now opening up the entry requirements to allow different supports, allowing more than just the standard paper or paper derivative in hopes of broadening the show. You are also encouraging entries from artists who "utilize watercolor in intriguing ways both in terms of the content of the imagery as well as the process in which it was made.

You are attempting to broaden the show. Of course artists who have entered the show in the past have tended to be more experimental than those who enter other national shows. What is your definition of "utilizing watercolor in intriguing ways"? Are artists who work in more traditional ways discouraged from entering Watercolor USA?

By opening up the requirements and broadening who can enter, we hope to encourage even more experimental work. I think that this is something that distinguishes Watercolor USA from other competitions and we want to play to this strength. The phrase "utilize watercolor in intriguing ways," is to be defined by the artists entering the exhibition. We were careful in crafting this phrase to allow artists as much license as possible while still giving some direction. It is intentionally left to interpretation. Artists are creative people, why don't we let them be creative? There may be artists out there pushing the medium in new, exciting directions that defy any expectations we as museum professionals may have. We would hate to miss the opportunity to showcase these artists and bring their work to our audience because our requirements are too tight or restrictive. Of course artists working in more traditional ways are encouraged to enter as well. The show's title "Watercolor USA" implies that it is a survey of what is happening in watercolor on a national scale. This includes traditional methods as well as experimental approaches. I would like the exhibition to continue to fulfill

An Interview with Nick Nelson

continued

this promise by not only seeking out the very best in watercolor from all 50 states but also by representing the widest cross-section of artists utilizing the medium in the moment, from those artists carrying forward traditional uses to those who are redefining the medium by pushing the boundaries of what a watercolor can be.

What are some of the things you would like to see Watercolor USA Honor Society do as an organization in the future to better support the Springfield Art Museum?

I would like to see the museum build on its already stellar watercolor collection and expand interpretation of this collection. The Watercolor Honor Society can assist in these efforts by continuing to support acquisitions and expanding educational opportunities not only for artists working in aqueous media but also for the general public. Support of these efforts may take any number of forms from assisting with acquisitions through gifts to helping develop workshops and conferences. I am excited about working with the Watercolor Honor Society in defining the future of watercolor at the Springfield Art Museum.

Will the Springfield Art Museum continue to support Watercolor Now! exhibitions every 4 years?

Yes. I hope that we can work together to think of new ways for this exhibition to expand awareness of watercolor and aqueous media and to bring great art to the communities we serve. I am also excited about the international exchanges that the Watercolor Honor Society hosts. All of these efforts move us toward further recognition as a center for watercolor on a national scale.

Do you have some ideas about other changes you would like to see to make Watercolor USA an even more prestigious show?

I hope that as we expand and open Watercolor USA to more artists and give larger awards we will garner more attention. I would also like to see our judges, who include some of the region's most outstanding museum professionals, engaged in new ways. Our judge for the upcoming Watercolor USA is Barbara O'Brien, Director, Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art in Kansas City. This exhibition represents a nexus of talent: artists who are producing the best in aqueous media across the nation and top museum professionals who are choosing the works that these artists produce. I would really like to explore ways to unlock this confluence of talent and energy to further expand and improve the exhibition.

WHS Artist Walter H. Chapman Celebrates 100th Birthday

Walter H. Chapman, WHS member from Sylvania, OH, was honored by the Sylvania Chamber of Commerce and Franciscan University last year for his contribution to the community on his 100th year. Working in watercolor, oils and other media, Walter was awarded the Bronze Star for combat art in World War II. His renderings were later published in Theodore Draper's "Battle of Germany," published by Viking Press. Walter is recovering at home with his wife, Jean, after recently undergoing surgery, radiation treatment and the effects of his fall. He and Jean celebrated their 50th anniversary on Jan 29, 2013. Congratulations to both of them and best wishes for a full recovery.

Contributed by Jerry and Jo Ellis

Laurin McCracken
Award Winner

WHS member **Laurin McCracken** is a realistic painter of the highest order. His subject matter is extremely complex, rendered with a lot of detail and the use of pigment with a higher level of intensity than is usually seen in watercolor. His work is greatly influenced by the Dutch and Flemish artists of the 16th and 17th centuries. Laurin states that "while I also paint florals, big clouds and even architectural subjects - I keep returning to complex subjects full of light, reflections and refractions."

Laurin grew up in small towns in Mississippi. As a small child he contracted polio at the age of six. Confined to a hospital for six weeks and his family having limited resources, his mother brought him a ream of typing paper and a few #2 pencils. Laurin says he spent days in "quarantine isolation" drawing cowboys and Indians. Although he feels himself lucky to have been able to walk out of that hospital, because of the effects of polio he was not able to participate in sports as a kid; therefore drawing and music were of great importance to him.

Laurin attended the School of Architecture at Auburn University for four years, graduated from Rice University with a BA degrees in both Art and Architecture and, after 3 years in the Army, attended Princeton University where he earn an MA in Architecture and Urban Planning. For 40 years he ran marketing programs for some of the leading architectural and engineering firms in the US, allowing him to travel over 6 million miles. Visiting museums in the great cities of Europe he always carried his sketchbook to record the wonders of his travels - from the Victoria's Peak in Hong Kong to the glassware and papers on a conference table in London.

He first came to watercolor after admiring watercolor paintings by students who had studied with Gwen Bragg, following which, through the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, he linked up with Alan Gavin, who encouraged him to continue working in the medium. Laurin now receives a multitude of prestigious awards for his work, and is recognized both nationally and internationally as one of the best artists working in the medium today.

Laurin states that his major motivation in creating art is "the joy of being able to translate what I see in the world onto paper so that I can share it with others." He feels that he is one of the luckiest people in the world . He has a second career that allows him to do something he loves; at the same time others are able to benefit from, value and enjoy what he produces. In conclusion, Laurin quotes from Thoreau, "It is not what you look at, it is what you see that is important."

Laurin McCracken - Crystal & Silver w Magnolia on Linen

Grace Swanson

Award Winner

Grace Swanson - Canine Combustibles

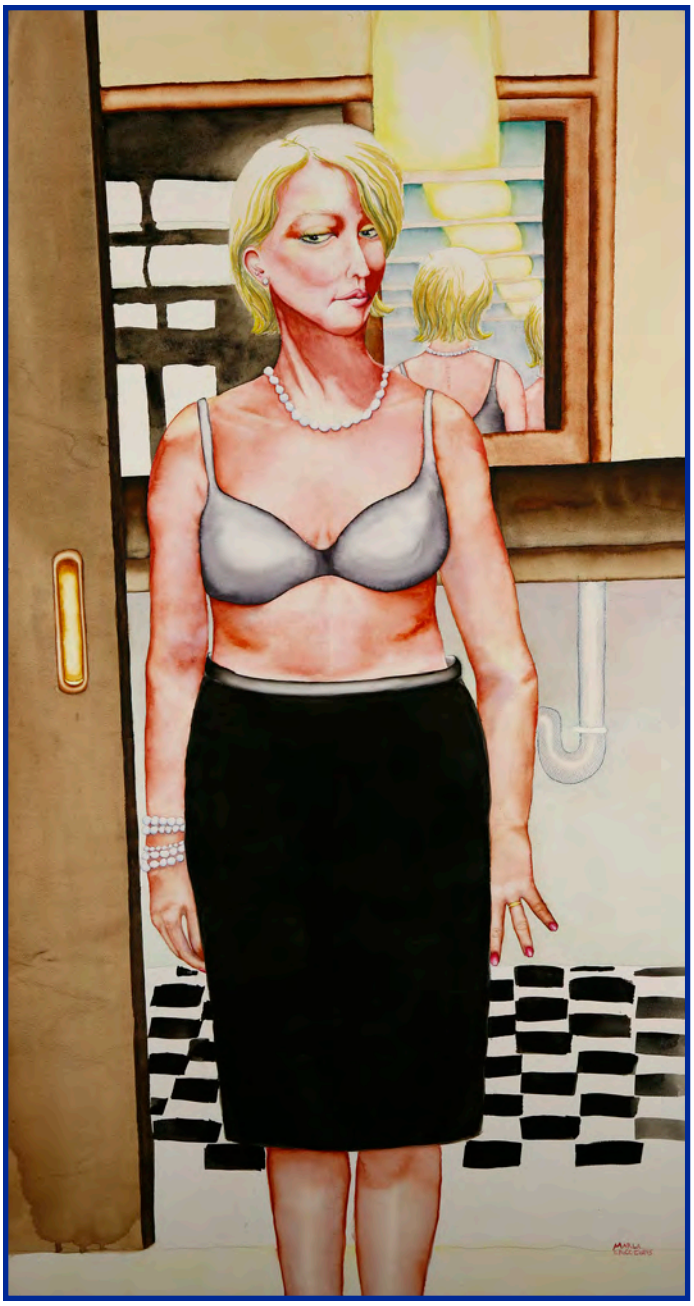
WHS member **Grace Swanson** was the winner of two awards in last year's Watercolor USA Exhibition, the WHS Purchase for the Museum Collections and the Nancy L. Pate Memorial Cash Award for her painting *Manhattan Memories. Manhattan Memories* is part of a series of paintings that she has painted with the goal of stimulating the senses and evoking memories. She states of her "matchbook series", that, as a photorealistic painter there is gratification in trying to capture particular details that pinpoint the emotional element in a painting such as marks on a used matchbook striker, or the slightly caved-in corner of a matchbook. According to Grace, it all began when she was moving around her husband's collection of matchbooks, which were kept in oversized brandy snifters. Nostalgia hit her as she saw the matchbooks of the many restaurants and hotels they had visited. She also realized that many New York restaurants had closed or were about to close, such as the Tavern on the Green or Cafe' des Artistes. It inspired her to work on this series that emphasized nostalgia by prominently featuring matchbooks from famous restaurants no longer in existence or by combining current hot spots with those now extinct.

Grace says that she loves contrasting vibrant colors and defining shapes with light and shadows. She tries to create images that can stimulate the senses; it may be the scent of a just peeled orange, the feel of silk embroidery or the recollection of matchbooks sitting in a kitchen junk drawer. In most of her subjects her subject matter consists of objects with one or two dominant colors, often complements of each other. She loves the push-pull tension of red against green or white and black; the way they play off each other. In the matchbook paintings she has taken this to the extreme by creating a crazy quilt of contrasting color squares.

Grace grew up in Los Angeles at a time when there was an emphasis in arts education, where students were encouraged to paint as an indoor activity. The memories of these fun-filled activities stayed with her. As an adult she went on to earn a BA in Studio Arts at Loyola at Marymount University as well as an Art History Degree. She credits her inspiration as a watercolorist to Michael Tang as an instructor, and to Carolyn Brady and Joseph Raffael for their carefully rendered paintings about everyday life through their use of intense color and rhythmic patterns.

Grace is currently working on a cat and dog themed matchbook series. She states that it is the natural progression from her earlier series that focused on particular cities.

Marla Rice-Evans
Award Winner



Marla Rice-Evans - The Skirt

Marla Rice-Evans has an extremely diverse educational and work related background. She has an undergraduate degree in French with a minor in Theatre, including studies in French language training at the Universite de Bourgogne. Following these years she attended the University of Berkeley, receiving licensure to teach French to middle and high schools. From that point on she has worked in nonprofit organizations for 30 years now - 12 years in arts administration including as Associate Director of the ArtSchool, Center for the Performing Arts in North Carolina. As an aside it is here that she first met WHS member Missie Dickens who was her first official art teacher. Marla later served as the first Executive Director of the Piedmont Council of the Arts and later as the Director of Development of the Metropolitan Arts Council in Omaha, Nebraska. She states she was "surrounded by the arts and raising money for the arts - trying to bring arts to as many communities as possible as frequently as possible and trying to make a case for support to decisions makers in both private and public sectors. For anyone working to garner support for the arts they know how hard this task can be." Beyond the arts she has worked in social services - in Boston and Roxbury as Interim Director and Development Director at the Foundation for Children with AIDS and in higher education at three universities, and most recently now for fifteen years as the Associate Vice Chancellor in Advancement at the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Despite her major work load, Marla has found a way to fit in painting, something she truly loves! She credits her first official exposure to watercolor with Missie Dickens as a major influence, inspiring in her a love and enthusiasm for the medium.

Marla's award winning painting, *The Skirt*, is very self referential and reflects much of what she hopes to portray in her work. She says she is drawn to individual moments in time that reflect a bigger story and feeling. She had just finished working a l7.5 hour day without having stopped a minute. She saw herself in the mirror and couldn't believe the long day and the fatigue and the adrenaline. When looking at herself her thought was that no one knew she was there, that she had had an ultra long day full of reports, meetings and driving, yet her skirt was still unwrinkled and her pearls in place. She thought of all the people who have endless days of work and the fact that they have to do what needs to be done in the work world in order to survive. Marla claims *The Skirt* was not intended to be a complaint, but rather a factual statement of a moment in time.

Marla says that entering competitive exhibitions is fun, humbling, confusing, exciting and worth it. When she gets home after a nine hour work day, she sets aside one hour for painting. This is something she loves and "will keep on with this cherished pursuit every minute I can and forever so."

Member News

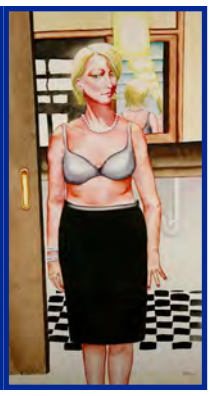
Pat Berger had a one person exhibition entitled *Women and Plants of the Bible* at the Karpeles Manuscript Library & Museum in Santa Barbara, CA from January 3rd through April 30th, 2013.

Grace Swanson had a feature article in the Winter 2012 edition of American Artist Magazine entitled *Enjoying the Journey*.

Sandra Schaffer had a one person show of her Contemporary Classics series entitled *Reflections* at the Margaret Harwell Art Museum in Poplar Bluff, MO from August 4-September 30, 2012. She will serve as Juror of Awards for the Missouri Watercolor Society International 2013 Exhibition. She received the Golden State I Award in the 2013 California Watercolor Association 2013 National Exhibition, and, with this acceptance, was awarded Master Signature status MCWA.

Mary Wilbanks WHS, NWS had a retrospective of her work in oil, watercolor and acrylic collage at Envision Gallery in Taos, New Mexico from October 6, 2012 through Thanksgiving Day of 2012.

Laurin MCracken AWS, NWS was recognized with the following awards in national and international exhibitions in 2012: Mississippi Grand National - Honorable Mention; Tennessee Watercolor Society - The Totally Transparent Award and the Region III Award; Louisiana Watercolor Society - Honorable Mention; Watercolor Art Society-Houston-Honorable Mention; Society of Watercolor Artists-Third Prize; Richeson 75-Small Works Competition-Second Prize Watermedia; Richeson75-Landscape, Seascape and Architectural Competition-Second Prize Watermedia; Southern Watercolor Society-Salis International Award; Daniel Smith Annual Customer Art Contest-Grand Prize Award; The Cedars 2012-Honorable Mention. Laurin had a two man show at The Southside Gallery in Oxford, MS in November of 2012. His drawings and paintings have been published in: **Inspirations & Technical Breakthroughs, Secrets from the Contemporary International Watercolor Masters Volume I, Sketchbook Confidential 2, Drawing & Sketching Secrets and 100 Masters of Realistic Imagery.**



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