

## February Program: My Work as an Artist by James Boyd Brent

Both watercolor and intaglio consist of particles of pigment suspended in a medium, applied to white paper. Light passes through these films of pigment and bounces right back off the paper to the viewer. So they are both very much involved with the action of light.

I find watercolor to be the more engaging of the two, from the point of view of its technical elusiveness as well the fact that its quality of transparency allows you to really see all the layers of the painting—all the process that led up to the final product, the hand tracing a train of thought. You can also see something of the attitude of the artist, in that particular moment, in the shapes of all the layered brushstrokes.



▲ "Lake Superior", by James Boyd Brent.

Watercolors can also reveal pictorial traits of the moment—the light, the movement and stillness of a place, and time. It's my hope that when I immerse myself in a place through painting, these qualities emerge in my work.

The period of art that has always been an inspiration for me is the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century in Britain. There are notable artists of this time who used both watercolor and oil painting (and for some, printmaking, too) as parallel strands of artistic production, each of which

informed the other. For J.M.W. Turner, for example, the transparency and spontaneity of watercolor enlivened the brushwork in his oil paintings, and the richness of value and color of oil painting pushed him to strive for resonance and brilliance in his watercolors.



▲ "Sheep", by James Boyd Brent.

Science was also on the side of these artists. Advances in paper production

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Theme for the  
February MnWS Mini-Show  
(formerly Show-and-Tell):

### Blue (Really!)

Theme for Mini-show, February meeting will be Blue again since the January newsletter announced that the February theme would be blue. [Apologies!—ed.] Many of us thought January had a blue theme and brought paintings. Therefore, so as not to confuse everyone we will go with blue again. I think of red for February in the vein of Valentine love, so let's say red for passion and blue for peace, mix them together and we get purple! I think the slide show and mini show at the January meeting was fabulous. Honestly, we have great artists in this group and it is very exciting.

—Emmy White, MnWS Vice President (and Mini-Show Coordinator)

*Spring Show Prospectus . . .*

*Inside this Issue!*



*Plus, flyer and registration form for Fall  
2006 Workshop with Mary Alice Braukman!*

## MESSAGE *from the President*



I always enjoy teaching watercolor workshops, especially when there are 15-20 students like I had at Hopkins in January. Such a wide variety of styles and abilities make for a challenging couple days, but it keeps me hopping and it never gets dull. At times I feel the need to be a bit of a cheerleader to keep students from getting frustrated as they attempt to loosen up, and it's become obvious to me over the last couple years that most of their anguish can be traced not to an inability to handle watercolor washes, but the failure to begin with a solid drawing. The bad news is that no amount of fiddling and piddling with your brush can compensate for a poor drawing. The good news is that, although a bit of talent helps, drawing is a skill that can be improved upon with practice.

As children, my 5 brothers and I were constantly drawing. We copied pages from comic books, made our own movie posters, and even recreated all 52 covers of the Hardy Boys books. I wish I had that collection now. My father worked as a computer programmer for one of the paper mills that are so prevalent in eastern Wisconsin. He'd come home from work now and then with reams of paper, and it was like Christmas morning. There is definitely an artistic gene running through my family. My mom has it, my uncle was a California landscape painter, two of my nephews are looking into art schools, one of my older brothers could easily make a living as an artist or illustrator if he wanted, and my kids love to draw and paint with me. I nurtured this inherited skill in school through life drawing classes where we'd begin with rapid-fire 10-second gesture drawings of the models, and I'm convinced that's helped me add figures into my landscapes now. I make a living primarily as a medical illustrator, and the tight deadlines force me to draw quickly and accurately. All the time I've put in drawing and sketching has paid dividends now in my paintings.

One of the biggest obstacles to a correct drawing is getting past our preconceived notions. You see a pine tree, and your brain pulls out some dusty old stock file of a pine tree, and that's what ends up on your paper. Or worse yet, a whole row of the same pine tree repeated over and over on a hill-top. You need to study each particular tree; the way its branches exit the trunk, how the lower, heavier branches hang horizontally and the smaller branches higher up reach toward the sky-- all that stuff matters. A good exercise for accuracy in shapes is to concentrate not on the objects, but the space around the objects, the negative shapes. Concentrate on the relationships around the entire paper, one object to another. I guarantee you that's the best way to eliminate buildings that end up 5 feet below the road, or all those giants walking around hailing cabs. If you're still struggling, turn your reference photo upside down. Suddenly you don't see dogs, fences and houses but abstract shapes that your brain needs to study in order for you to draw them. You'll be amazed at how accurate these exercises can be.

Don't kid yourself into thinking that there are shortcuts around learning this basic skill. I'd have a tough time naming an accomplished artist who couldn't draw well. Of course, the 'Catch 22' is that we want to create paintings, not illustrations. You may think that accuracy and detail are secondary considerations, but I stress to my students that the way to loosen up your painting is by knowing that your 'map' is accurate. Then and only then can you load your brush up and attack the paper with confidence and speed. Besides, like illustrations, most of us want to create paintings that tell a story. The latest issue of International Artist magazine has a wonderful article by Neil Boyle where he talks about the importance his background as an illustrator. He has a great quote that he tells his students; "Fine art is an illustration with a frame around it." Kind of makes you look at it in a different way, which is the best way to really see.



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### BrushStrokes Newsletter

BrushStrokes is published monthly, September through June. Deadlines are the 15th of the month. Send letters to the editor and art related stories that help inform or educate members to:

**MnWS BrushStrokes Editor**  
1830 Dutch Heritage Ct.  
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(please do not use [lbaur@att.net](mailto:lbaur@att.net)--account no longer active)

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Mary Hanson 952-476-6896

**Due to the Spring Show Reception falling in May this year, our Annual Swap Meet will be held at the MARCH meeting. Start cleaning out your studio now and gathering all those unused art books and materials. Find a new home for the stuff you're not using, some new space in your closets, and some new (to you) stuff to fill it up again with at this fun event. Plus, Judy Lieber will present a delightful mini-demo on caricatures!**

# Watercolor 101

by John O'Leary

Genial Andy Evansen presented an weekend workshop for sixteen attentive students at The Hopkins Center for the Arts on January 7 and 8.



▲ George Pope monitors the progress of Andy's demo painting.

Andy's credo is, "Have a plan or idea regarding the outcome of your painting. Careful draftsmanship is paramount. The underlying drawing should be minimal but accurate; just adequate enough to provide the necessary guidelines. Simplify and connect shapes of equal value and connect smaller shapes into larger ones. Try to complete the painting in as few washes as possible and avoid going back

▲ Jean Meyer at work.



into a still wet wash in an attempt to "fix it". Keep your brushes large and loaded, saving the smaller brushes to add detail and "punch" in the "end game" phase of your painting. And finally, "there's no substitute for persistence and practice."

Andy's approach to successful watercolors is basic and honest, avoiding the gimmicky, "how to paint rocks with coffee filters and saran wrap" school of instruction. Sixteen weekend warriors came away from this short course informed and enthused. ■



▲ Introduce a darker value in this area, counsels Andy.

## Help Wanted! Workshop Team

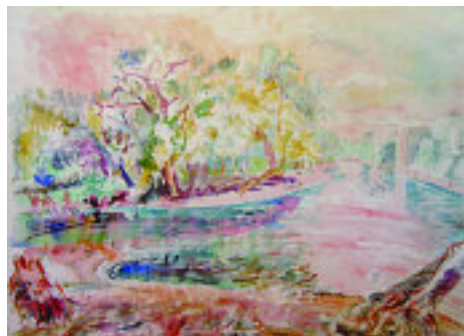
Want a great excuse to call some of the best watercolorists in the country? Want to pick the workshops you really want to take? Our workshop team's term of service is ending.. Volunteers needed to chair the committee and to help with publicity, registration and other tasks..

Contact Andy Evansen (651.480.1742 , aevansen@cvtel.net) for more information on how you can help.

## February Program

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(Turner worked with Whatman to create more resilient paper, more suited to tough outdoor treatment), in color chemistry, and in color manufacture allowed artists to head off into the towns and into the countryside with their conveniently portable new outdoor watercolor painting kits under their arms in search of new subjects. These subjects were sometimes grand, such as Turner's views of the Alps, and sometimes humble, such as his watercolor sketches of everyday life on the often inhospitable British coastline.



▲ "Mississippi, Ft. Snelling" by James Boyd Brent.

I have recently curated an exhibition of watercolors at the Winona Arts Center. The exhibition, "The Watercolor Studio" (Winona Arts Center, December 11th to Feb 5th) is of paintings of watery places in Minnesota by five artists whose studios are as much the outdoors as they are a quiet room inside. Many of these paintings were done in the watercolor class that I have taught for the past few years in the Split Rock Arts Program. Although outdoor conditions are rarely perfect in these places (and in this part of the world, generally), each of these artists loves the experience of long hours of immersion in nature. So this exhibition is also about the art of being.

The other goal of this exhibition is to show watercolor as part of a continuum of artistic activity, a respectable artistic medium among other mediums. This is why I have also included an example by each of the artists of work that is not a watercolor. Hopefully the connections between this work will reveal something about how the medium helps stimulate aesthetic direction (see each individual artists' statements for more about this connection).

It's the thorough absorption in place—the

moment in nature—that drives the artistic practice of these five artists. There's a subtle aesthetic exchange between the excitement of painting outdoors and the calm reflectiveness that the indoor studio environment allows. Hopefully some of this relationship is apparent in this exhibition. My own work has been guided for the past 25 years, and more, by the ever fascinating pleasure of being human and of being here, in time.

"The Watercolor Studio" is an exhibition of landscape watercolors by Anders Shafer, Barbara Shafer, Holly Nelson, James Boyd-Brent, and Meg Bussey, at the Winona Arts Center, December 11th to Feb 5th. ■

*James Boyd-Brent is an artist/printmaker who grew up in England and has taught watercolor at the Split Rock Arts Program since 2001, and teaches drawing, graphic design, printmaking for designers, and design theory in the Department of Design, Housing, and Apparel at the University of Minnesota. He has curated two exhibitions on design and place—Here by Design 1 and 2—and has exhibited his own work throughout the US and UK. He is an Associate Member of the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers, London.*

## MEMBER *happenings*

Send member news to: *BrushStrokes*, 1830 Dutch Heritage Ct., Baldwin, WI 54002-5155, or email to [lbaur@mac.com](mailto:lbaur@mac.com). Images are welcome and will be used as space permits.

**Terry Genesen Becker's** watercolor "El Final Del Viaje:a la Derecha" was 1 of 173 pieces selected from a field of 490 for the Arts in Harmony '06 juried exhibition.

**Jane Freeman** had 8 pages in the Dec/Jan issue of *International Artist* magazine, which was quite a thrill. She is also am presently working on a book for North Light.

Congratulations Everyone! ■

Did you have a success this month that you forgot to tell us about? Don't be shy—send it in! And, just because some of our most experienced members are sending in some pretty high-octane news, don't think that's all we want to publish. We also want to celebrate your very first acceptance in a juried show or your first award. If you were excited about it, then it's worth publishing here—we want to celebrate all our members' artistic accomplishments!

## Your Opportunity for Fame!

Kennedy Promotions is producing its second unique new book series, The **BEST OF AMERICA: WATERCOLOR ARTISTS 2005**, 200+ winners featured in a beautiful soft cover book listed with major online booksellers. Cash prizes awarded to 5 Best in Show. Open to all U.S. watercolor artists. Also included is a special Emerging artist category. \$30/3 slides, 4x6 photos, or CD entries, \$5 for each additional entry. DEADLINE: FEB. 15.

For more information or to download an entry form visit our website at

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## the WORKshopper

Send Workshop listings to: *Workshopper*, 1830 Dutch Heritage Ct., Baldwin, WI 54002-5155, or email to [lbour@mac.com](mailto:lbour@mac.com).

### Jan Fabian Wallake

►2006–Nov. 11-14. Brevard Watercolor Society, Cape Canaveral, FL. Contact: Linda Neal, 321-751-5520.

Jan has a once-a-month, three-hour class in Roseville. If you are interested in joining this fun and friendly group, call Jan at 651-351-1301 (no long term commitment—come when you can, pay only for the class you attend).

### Lana Grow

►April 3-7, 2006. Aqua Media & Collage/Experimental and Energizing. Limited enrollment—10 students. Contact: Edina Art Center, 612-915-6600.

►Fall 2006 (dates TBA). Aqua Media & Collage/Experimental and Energizing. White Bear Center for the Arts. Contact: Sue Ruthford, 651-407-5096.

### Karlyn Holman

►May 2-17, 2006. Paint and Tour Ireland with Karlyn Holman. Fully escorted tour, open to painters and non-painters alike. For brochure call 715.373.2922 or go to [www.karlynholman.com](http://www.karlynholman.com)

### Judy Lieber

►Painting on Monday Afternoon—any medium. 1 - 4 p.m., 8 wks.; starts Feb. 6.

►Tuesday Morning Portrait—any medium, different model each class. 9-noon, 8 wks.; starts Feb. 7.

Contact: Judy Lieber; 952.884.1815 or the Edina Art Center; 612-915-6600.



## MnWS Workshops

**Weekend Workshop**  
March 2006—Fred Dingler

**Fall 2006 Workshop**  
Oct 10–13, 2006  
Mary Alice Braukman

For MnWS workshop information contact  
Bonnie Crouch, coordinator (952-945-0682)  
Dianne Jandt, registration (952-891-2375)  
or John O'Leary, publicity (952-888-0638)

### Nancy Patrick Carney

►Perspective Made Easy: Representing in two dimensions what the eye and brain perceive in a three-dimensional world. Bring drawing materials and a 9x12 or larger pad of paper. Sat, Feb 11, 10am–3pm. Minnetonka Center For The Arts, \$40 members, \$44 non-members. 952-473-7361 to register.

## Northstar News

**February 16.** *Painting makeovers with Marian Alstad and Frank Zeller.*

**March 16.** *“Exchange Meeting”: panel on giclees; member sale/exchange of art books and materials.*

**April 20.** *Don Andrews demo.*

**May 25 (4th Thurs).** *Marie Hammond demo.*

For meeting info contact Judy Fawcett (651) 731-2972

Meeting location is Centennial United Methodist Church, 1524 W. County Rd. C2 at Snelling in Roseville.

[www.northstarwatercolorssociety.com](http://www.northstarwatercolorssociety.com)

### Karen Knutson

►May 15-17, 2006 (Mon-Wed); 9 a.m.–4 p.m. “Starting with Abstract—Moving to Traditional” \$200 Duluth Art Institute members (\$240 non-members). A \$50 non-refundable deposit is required upon registration.

Contact: Duluth Art Institute, (218) 733-7560

### John Salminen

►October 9-13, 2006 (Mon-Fri), 9 a.m.–4 p.m. \$375 Duluth Art Institute members (\$425 non-members). A \$100 non-refundable deposit is required upon registration. Contact: Duluth Art Institute, (218) 733-7560.

## Join Karlyn and Gary Holman on an escorted trip to Ireland May 2-17, 2006.

This is an invitation to join us on a travel adventure that will immerse you in the local history, culture and folklore of Ireland at the grassroots level, guided by master storyteller Batt Burns. Be prepared to laugh a lot as you travel through the spectacular countryside of Ireland. We are going to experience authentic Ireland. Batt is the living embodiment of Irish hospitality. He will share the spirit and soul of Ireland. He will take us to places you would never find on your own, even a hooley at his house with live music. We will explore the beauty of the countryside but we will also become aware of some of the harsh realities of Ireland's past. We will live like the Irish, not just visit. **This trip includes everything, even airfare, departure taxes, tip, most meals and instruction in watercolor or sketching.**



Check out the day-by-day itinerary and the breakdown of the cost at <http://www.gtd.org/tripshow.asp?gn=060501>.

Check out Karlyn's website for current newsletter on hotels at [www.karlynholman.com](http://www.karlynholman.com).

Call Karlyn at 715-373-2922 or email [karlyn@karlynholman.com](mailto:karlyn@karlynholman.com) to see about joining this fun adventure.