

All the Prize Winners in our *International Artist* magazine  
Challenge No. 61

# Landscapes



## MY INSPIRATION

First and foremost, nature is the inspiration for my work. This particular piece was created as a result of a hiking trip I made to a deserted island near my hometown of St. George's, Newfoundland. This island is called Sandy Point, and I love to hike and kayak around the nooks and crannies of this area, and all other areas around Newfoundland. I'm always intrigued about what's around the next bend or over that hill. This is very exciting to me, and inspires me to investigate further. I stumbled upon this formation of tangled driftwood as I was walking along Sandy Point's shoreline. It was like a cemetery for driftwood, that stretched for about a kilometer. I simply could not resist this opportunity, and the painting "Driftwood" was created. I changed the sky from my original source material, extended and slightly exaggerated some forms, and later added the crows.

## MY DESIGN STRATEGY

I take thousands of digital images for possible future paintings with my 35mm. I always carry my camera because I never know what may show up, and the camera is very fast at capturing a moment. It's a wonderful tool. When I see something of interest, I take many shots from various angles, always searching for the best possible composition. Depending on the subject, I do sketches of special and unique forms on the spot, along with some notes. Sometimes, I may use up to 15 images to create one painting. This particular piece only required four. Later, I cut and paste certain elements into a selected scene, searching for a pleasing composition. I size and re-size these elements until they appear correct, always keeping in mind the direction of the light source. When I arrive at something I like, I transfer this image to my panel.

## MY WORKING PROCESS

I first prepare my panel by cutting the required size, sanding it, and then applying four to five coats of gesso with a paint roller. After this is dry, I sand the last layer. I usually work by thinking from background to foreground, and not from top to bottom. If there is a sky, I will always paint it first, until fully completed. I never try to cover the whole panel immediately. My process and way of thinking is that I will cross that bridge when I get to it. In other words, I only paint one specific area at a time. I try to leave out as much line drawing as possible, because I prefer to draw with brush and paint. It allows me more control and freedom. Squinting is also a neat little trick to delete details and to clearly see more of the larger forms.

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## Grand Prize Winner US\$2000 and an Official Award Certificate

**BRIAN LASAGA, St Georges, Canada**  
*Driftwood,*  
acrylic, 22 x 32" (55 x 81 cm)

**B**rian LaSaga's paintings combine his love of the natural world with his ability to depict scenes in an almost three-dimensional style. LaSaga's studio is in St. George, Newfoundland, where he is surrounded by the coastlines, rivers, forests, wildlife, ponds and marshes that frequent his work.

"Nature is my muse and inspiration simply because of her endless subject matter and surprises," says LaSaga. "This collaboration offers me something I never even thou got. Although I prefer to paint nature themes, weathered objects and rural settings, I'm open to other things that may catch my eye."

LaSaga finds a certain mystery and sense of discovery in nature and this is what he tries to convey through the details of his paintings.

"For me, hiking and collecting material for paintings is similar to hunting and gathering," says LaSaga. "It's always a thrill to wonder what's over that ridge, or around the bend. I like to create a sense of place that is somewhere but nowhere in particular."

This, along with a strong technical foundation, is what inspired LaSaga to create his new landscape paintings.

"Capturing nature in the process of consuming something has always been a favorite subject of mine," says LaSaga. "Light, shadow, composition, and form are key elements in my work. My goal is not to paint life but to paint life into my work and create an emotional connection that I hope will inspire my viewers."

By focusing on objects becoming consumed by their natural environment, LaSaga spends a considerable amount of time being an observer of nature and that informs his work as well.

"I am a constant observer," says LaSaga. "I prefer to paint familiar experiences and subjects indigenous to my area and this area I feel to be raw and sacred. My main interest is in capturing the essence of his chosen subject."