

Tom Francesconi news, tusa

Watercolor Impressions



Port en Bessin

I don't know, maybe it's the lack of precipitation in Chicago this winter but I just haven't had much inspiration for snow-laden landscapes. What I have been busy with is figurative works, along with paintings from my France trip. I have included some of these paintings in this newsletter.

NEWS!!

I am introducing a new column in this issue, *Keeping an Open Palette*. The articles in this column will share my thoughts about various topics related to painting. I hope you will find it informative and enjoyable!

MORE NEWS!!

The February issue of Watercolor Artist features my First Place painting from the 2011 Watercolor West Exhibition. It was such an honor to have my work included in that special issue that highlights the top award-winning paintings from some of the most respected watercolor exhibitions around the country. The exhibition was held at the city of Brea Gallery in Brea, California.

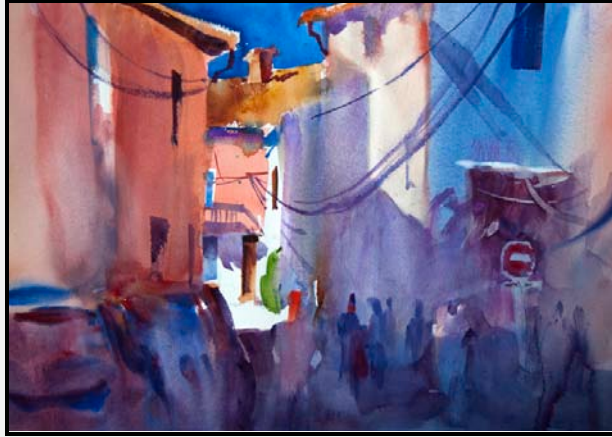


Paintings from France and Belgium

My 2010 workshop in southeastern France was centered in the wonderful hillside village of Bonnieux, affording views of the Luberon Mountains and the valley below. It was such a charming village and subject matter was everywhere. What a joy it was to paint in that special place!



Bonnieux Church



The steep, narrow and winding streets of town were so different from anything I had known, with a surprise around every turn. I felt as if I could have painted in Bonnieux for a lifetime!



Ah, the light, the magnificent light!



Cafes are truly a part of the French way of life. A glass of wine with cheese, a loaf of bread and an outside table with stimulating conversation, are all you really need. I suppose you could throw in a beret, just for good measure!

After a week in southern France, my family and I drove to Paris and then to the coast and north to Belgium. Along the Normandy coast we came to the picturesque port of Honfleur, situated along the estuary of the Seine River. Honfleur is a real visual treat, although in this painting, I focused on the locals.



Our travels across the border took us to Belgium where we settled in the historic center of Brugge. Brugge often has been referred to as the “Venice of the North” with its canals that blissfully meander through the old city. Beautiful!

The central plaza of Brugge was a hub of activity, formed by the facades of medieval architecture and dressed up with the canopies of bustling cafes. Everywhere I turned I saw nothing but paintings.



Keeping an Open Palette



The Game Plan

In the many years I have been teaching watercolor, I have had the chance to see how students will often pass over any preliminary considerations about painting, and decide in favor of just picking up the brush and charging full speed ahead. In my own work, I experience the same temptations to 'cut to the chase.' Obviously the joy of painting can be very persuasive. However, there are a number of benefits to resisting that temptation. Have you ever watched an athlete prepare for an athletic event? He or she likely will be taking part in some kind of warm-up exercises. It's just part of the game plan. Not to do so would be to flirt with physical disaster. As a painter, involving oneself in the act of preliminary planning can be considered akin to that warming-up period. Just think of it as an attempt to avoid 'paper disaster'. It helps get our creative juices flowing. It's at this time that good things can happen. Mental cobwebs are brushed aside and ideas start

to flow. Given the chance, clarity of thought just may unveil itself. And imagine that, all before the brush hits the paper! If we allow for it, we may find ourselves absorbed in this mental activity of problem-solving, better known as the creative process. Wow, this is really good stuff!

Even though we may know all of this, we can still succumb to the temptation to go around the speed bump and plow ahead. Let's come at it from a different angle. When you get into your car and leave the house in the morning, do you drive around the streets of town aimlessly, hoping that some idea of what to do with your day will suddenly come to you? No, it's more likely that you have plans and know where you are going. So why pick up the brush without giving some thought to what you want to say and how you want to say it? Why cross your fingers and hope that something good will happen with paint? I am not saying that it won't, but it is far less likely if you have not taken the time to plan.

The preliminary sketch is that place. It is here that we consider matters of composition such as: designing the parts and the placement of those parts, value structure, directional forces, unity and the development of a center of interest. If we plan well, we can be free to think more about color during the painting process, without as much concern for the aforementioned compositional hurdles. They already will have been cleared. The preliminary sketch really can play an important role in your game plan. Why not give it a 'go'?



Hats off to...

I am grateful to all the artists who attended my workshop at Positive Strokes Art School and Gallery in Palatine, Illinois, this past January. I especially would like to thank Carole Burval for organizing this workshop, along with opening her home to me for 3 nights and hosting a Saturday night dinner. Carole worked very hard to make it a special evening for everyone and it was, indeed, a delicious affair!

I am scheduled to return to Positive Strokes **April 20-22, 2012**. If interested, please contact Carole at: (847) 840-7731 carole@watercolorcards.com.

More 2012 Workshops

- **March 10** Old Town Art Center, Chicago, IL. *One-day* figure workshop (Please see further information on page 8.)
Contact Leslie Wolfe at (312) 337 1938 lwolfe@oldtowntriangle.com
- **March 16-18, 2012** LaGrange Art League, LaGrange, IL.
Lagrangeartleague.org (708) 352 3101
- **May 21-25, 2012** Ellison Bay workshop in beautiful Door County, Wi.
I already have begun to receive early registrations. All levels of painters are welcome. (See page 9.) info@tomfrancesconi.com (708) 799 8161
- **September 1-10, 2012** Island of Korcula, Croatia 
Among the painters already signed up for this workshop, two are from Australia! I am looking forward to visiting Dubrovnic and painting the bounty of subjects that the island of Korcula has to offer. Why not join us for a very special plein air painting excursion? For more information, please go to www.slikamilina.ca or call Lynda Milina at: 613 241 9631.
- **October 10-12, 2012** Southwestern Watercolor Society, Dallas, Texas
- **October 23-25, 2012** L'Atelier Art Studio, Janesville, WI.
Claudiadair Fitzgerald at cfitzartist@gmail.com or call (608) 754-3358

Painting the Figure in Watercolor

with Tom Francesconi



Where: Old Town Art Center ~ 1763 N. North Park Ave., Chicago, IL

When: Saturday, March 10, 2012 9 am - 4 pm

Contact: Leslie Wolfe 312-337-1938 lwolfe@oldtowntriangle.com

This one-day watercolor workshop is designed to expose the student to Tom's simplified approach to painting the clothed figure. Tom will demonstrate his painting process from the beginning drawing to the finished painting. Rather than relying on the burdensome task of duplicating exactness, Tom endeavors to interpret the figure through an insightful and expressive painting process. Students will work from their own reference photographs. This workshop offers a wonderful opportunity to explore the figure in a joyful and creative way.

Tom Francesconi (708) 799-8161 info@tomfrancesconi.com www.tomfrancesconi.com

Tom Francesconi NWS, TWSA
Door County Watercolor Workshop



Where: Ellison Bay Community Center, Ellison Bay, Wisconsin

When: May 21-25, 2012 9 am - 4 pm

Contact: Tom Francesconi (708) 799-8161 info@tomfrancesconi.com

Situated along the shore of Ellison Bay, Wisconsin, on the beautiful Door County peninsula, this workshop will offer the student a wonderful learning opportunity as Tom shares his methods for painting bold, loose and interpretive watercolors. Along with discussions that cover a range of topics, Tom will do a complete painting demonstration each day. Subjects may include landscapes, urban scenes and the clothed figure. Students will work from their own references as they explore new ways to approach their paintings. Each indoor class day will end with a group critique. *Tom welcomes all painters.*

Weather permitting, a day of plein-air painting may also be scheduled. One day, a shore lunch will be provided for everyone. One evening, there will be a wine and cheese gathering at Tom's Ellison Bay home.

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