

Tom Francesconi aus, news, tusa

Watercolor Impressions



Honfleur Market Place

NEWS!!

My painting, "Honfleur Harbor Market" was awarded the Frank Nash Memorial Award at the **Transparent Watercolor Society of America** 2014 National Exhibition. It is always an honor to receive an award but this was a very special one for me. I had the chance to get to know Frank through his wife, Catherine Nash, who is a friend and a wonderful artist. About 10 years ago, Catherine and I served together on the Board of the then Midwest Watercolor Society. In fact, Catherine still serves on the TWSA Board today. Frank was a very kind and gentle man and freely offered his time to the society. It is a blessing to have had the opportunity to know Frank.



Tom receives his award from juror, Steve Rogers

This past summer, I attended the TWSA Awards Dinner held at the Kenosha Public Museum in Kenosha, Wisconsin. This gave me the opportunity to see the national show, catch up with old friends and meet some of the exhibiting artists – always a real treat! I also was honored to meet Janet and Steve Rogers, two wonderful painters who shared the judging process for the exhibition. Although I arrived too late to see Janet's morning demonstration, I was able to sit in on Steve's afternoon demo. What fun! The TWSA exhibition offers a great opportunity to see world-class paintings up close and personal in a beautiful setting along the Lake Michigan lake front. Those of us in the Chicago area are fortunate to have such a prestigious exhibition in our own back yard.

NEW WEBSITE!!

I have launched my new website! Although it may not win any awards, it will serve my purposes well and allow me more control at keeping it up-to-date. I expect that it will always be a work in progress but for now, at least it is up and running. The address is the same: www.tomfrancesconi.com I invite you to take a look and let me know what you think. I am always open to suggestions.

Keeping an Open Palette

I once had a small gallery where I exhibited my paintings. Anyone who came into the gallery could watch me paint in a studio space that was adjacent to the gallery. One day, a gentleman from Virginia came in and perused the works. After some time, he approached me and we enjoyed a pleasant conversation. Eventually, he asked me if my sketches were for sale. Through further conversation it became apparent that he had no interest in my paintings but that he was drawn to my sketches. Although I never let him know this, it left me troubled. What did he see in those sketches that were not to be found in my paintings? As time passed and through my own analysis, it became clear to me. The sketches were loose, interpretive statements, full of wonder and life. In them was a mark of personal expression. My paintings, on the other hand, were void of those characteristics. They lacked the spirit and mystery found in my sketches. I began to understand that when the brush was in my hand, I would change my thinking. I would become careful, painting in safe-mode. Was it “fear of failure”? After all, that is the single most reason for failed paintings. Looking back, I think there was too much of my reference material in those earlier paintings and not enough of me. I had always found myself gravitating toward the works of others that seemed more expressive, more personal, and certainly less perfect—a far cry from what I was doing. These were the paintings that would quicken my pulse and leave me wide-eyed with wonder.

My challenge was to find a way to paint like I drew in order to breathe new life into my work. To change the way I painted required that I first change the way I think, at least partially. Obviously, I liked my thinking with regards to my sketches. How was I going to get that to carry over into my paintings? I made a personal commitment to be more adventuresome in my painting procedure. Being careful and playing it “safe” was no longer going to be my approach. I vowed to let go. I began by getting out of my seat. I had grown accustomed to sitting while painting. Now, I stood up and kept at arm’s length from my work. This helped me break away from small, careful brushwork and encouraged me to see and to paint larger. It was also more difficult to be exact, forcing me to accept inaccuracies. None of this was easy but I was on a mission. I began to be bolder with my paint application and more creative with my color choices--sometimes to the point of going “over the top”. Initially, it may have been reckless painting,

but it was part of the process of trying to shake free of my old ways. In so doing, I was being forceful. I let go of my careful (and boring) line in favor of one that was less careful, more expressive. There began to be a wiggle where there used to be none. The drip went unblotted and the runback became tolerable. Paint was allowed to cross the pencil lines and mingle with its neighbor. I put reds into my greens and greens into my reds. I was releasing myself from the tyranny of the reference. What I had to say and how I said it became more important than the subject. Because I anticipated disappointments with my early attempts to change, I was determined to be bold. If I was going to fail, my failures would be grandiose, with the idea that if they were, I might be on the verge of something special. Besides, I thought, there is a greater chance to learn from big mistakes than from little ones. So I became a risk-taker, making big mistakes and learning bigger lessons, being more creative and breathing new life into my work.

Slowly, my work began to change. Things that used to be foreign to me became natural. In lieu of the literal, I introduced the emotional. Now, painting has become a more meaningful experience and my results please me more than ever before. Should everyone do as I did by shifting gears and going in another direction? No, not necessarily. But I do believe we should look within ourselves and listen intently. I believe if we do, and if we paint enough, what was meant to come forth will. The way I paint today suits me. It feels natural. When I look back, I see that the gentleman from Virginia was the impetus that effected change in me, to be more insightful, to care less about what is outside of me and more about what lies within. If I saw him today, I would thank him.

Happy painting!



African Queen

2014 Workshops

- **September 15-19, 2014** Beach Art Group, Panama City Beach, FL
Contact Helen Ferrell at beachartgroup@att.net (850) 265-0460.
This will be my 2nd visit to Panama City Beach which rests on the Gulf of Mexico coast. It long has been a popular vacation destination due to its beautiful sugar-white sandy beaches. The workshop is held at the Palms Conference Center in Panama City Beach. It is a spacious facility providing an ideal location to paint. **Workshop just completed!**



- October 20-23, 2014** Workshop is almost full. Call soon, if interested.
 Pike County Arts Council, McComb, MS
 Contact Susy Sanders at susymae68@yahoo.com Home (601) 684-9995 or
 Cell (601) 248-1023. 2220 Veterans Blvd. McComb, MS 39648
 This will be my first workshop in Mississippi and I am looking forward to it.
 This workshop offers the opportunity for a few days of concentrated study
 while making new friends and enjoying real southern hospitality...and New
 Orleans is less than a 2 hour drive away!
- Each year, Tom conducts 1 or 2 figure workshops in Chicago. These are
 one-day workshops that are scheduled on weekends, making it ideal for
 anyone in the Chicago area with a busy weekday schedule. These
 workshops are held at the Old Town Triangle Center. For updated
 information, please go to the Old Town Triangle website (see Classes).

2015 Workshops

- June 1-3, 2015** Door County, WI
 This is my annual spring workshop near my home in Ellison Bay. Door
 County is known for its picturesque coastal towns, specialty shops, fish
 boils, cherry and apple orchards and scenic beauty.
 (See page 7 for more information)

Tuscany, Italy!



- September 19-26, 2015** Tuscan Renaissance Center www.ilchiostro.com
 Don't miss this exciting opportunity to paint with Tom in the Chianti hills
 just outside of Siena in Tuscany, Italy. For more information, see website.

Tom Francesconi AWS, NWS, TWSA
Door County Watercolor Workshop



Where: Ellison Bay Community Center, Ellison Bay, Wisconsin

When: June 1-3, 2015 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 class day will end with a group critique. *Tom welcomes all painters.*

For specific information about any of these workshops including availability, description, registration, tuition, location, accommodations, etc., please use the contact information provided.

2014 Classes



Fall 2014 classes have begun!

Tom teaches a Saturday morning class at the Old Town Triangle Center in Chicago. Classes are generally 10-week sessions that run winter, spring, summer and fall. The Art Center is located in a charming, historical neighborhood, just 2 blocks from the acclaimed Lincoln Park area and the Lake Michigan lakefront. The Center is easily accessible and the neighborhood street parking is free! More information about this class can be found by going to:

www.oldtowntriangle.com Scroll along the red headers to **Art and Fitness Classes**. A drop down menu will appear. Click on **Art Classes**. Scroll down to the bottom to find more information about Tom's classes and any upcoming workshops.

As always, I welcome your comments.