

# THE Oil Spiel

August/September 2006

## *Letter from the Editor*

You may have noticed that the header of this newsletter issue is for August AND September. I am getting married in early September. With last minute wedding details, putting a newsletter together right before the wedding may be a bit difficult.

In an attempt to keep my stress levels down and not turn into the "Bride-zilla" monster, I will not be putting out a separate September newsletter.

I wanted to share a painting with you that came about while planning for the wedding. I took a photo of my nieces looking at themselves all dressed up in a 3-way mirror at a shop. They were so please with their grown-up dresses that I could not rest until I had painted this scene. I hope you enjoy seeing it as much as I enjoyed painting it.

I'll see you all again AFTER the big day!

*Ann*



*Flowergirls Dress Shopping*  
11x14", oil pastel on paper

## *Welcome to the Oil Pastel Society!*

New Professional Members:

*Karen Leeds*

New Associate Members:

*Carol Kazwick*

## WORKSHOPS & DEMOS

**Patricia Isaac** will be doing an OP demonstration at the Pembroke Arts Festival on Sat. Aug.5 from 1 - 3 pm. The Festival is located on the town green on Rt. 14 in Pembroke, MA

## MEMBER NEWS



*It's Spring*

**Patricia Isaac** received an honorable mention for her oil pastel "It's Spring" at the South Shore Science Center's all-media annual juried show. It is in the vine Gallery at the center and will be there until Sept 3.



*Nature's Tapestry*

From the Oil Pastel Society of Maine's national juried show, Patricia received an honorable mention for "Nature's Tapestry".

**Gail Higginbotham** received 1st prize in the Oil Pastel Society of Maine show.

**Luba Sterlikova** was invited to post her works in the 'Your Gallery' web resource of one of the leading galleries of Contemporary Art - The Saatchi Gallery of London  
<http://www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/yourgallery/artist/details.php?id=9052>



**Featured Artist  
of the Month**

**Maureen McKee**

*By Carol Zack*

**Meeting Maureen McKee:**

*After being accepted into my first juried show, not long ago, I wandered around the gallery to see just what kind of artwork I was hanging with. After a quick tour, I was feeling pretty good, and the show seemed to have some excellent work. One piece, I still remember, was especially captivating to me. When I saw it for the first time, I drew closer, and read the name and title, and noticed it was an oil pastel, but I didn't recognize the name (It was Maureen's). The work drew me in. I was fascinated with the color, the lyrical lines and the impressionistic atmosphere the artist had created. This artist, I said to myself, has a real command of the medium and I felt it was truly one of the best pieces in the show. Studying the art work made me want to go back to my studio and work harder at oil pastels.*

*I also noticed all the layering and whimsical marks that could mean different things to different viewers, and it continued to hold my attention. I went back several times to view it, and each time I stopped to take another look, taking time to show the visitors that came with me, what a beautiful oil pastel looks like.*

*Not long after, I received an invitation for lunch from a member of the oil pastel society who wanted to discuss the possibility of starting a local chapter of OPS. I was excited about the possibility. When I arrived, it wasn't long before I realized I was sitting next to the artist whose work I had been so fascinated with at the juried show. Well, meeting Maureen McKee that day was simply great!*

*So, I am delighted to introduce you to a wonderful oil pastel artist. I hope when you read about her and look more closely at her paintings, you will have the same fascination I have about her work. She is accomplished, seems grounded in classical disciplines that include drawing, and has a fascination and curiosity for trying new materials and using them in new and interesting ways. I asked her about exhibiting her work. Her answer, I think, reveals a positive attitude and a sincere desire to be creative and open-minded.*

*To see learn more and see other works by Maureen McKee, log on to her website at: <http://maureenmckee.home.comcast.net/>*



**"Giverny Musings"**  
**Oil Pastel**  
**20"x 14"**  
**Rives BFK**

***Congratulations Maureen on receiving an OPS Honorable Mention for your piece "Giverny Musings" in this year's OPS on line gallery show! The title of your entry suggests an influence from Impressionist artist Monet. Can you tell us more about how this piece came to be?***

In the case of Giverny Musings - It reminded me of some of Monet's waterlily paintings when completed. I was experimenting with water and its textures. I often have a camera with me and have built up a collection of photographs that I have taken at various places. In this case, I had a few photos from botanical gardens and also some from local garden stores displaying the pond gardens that are currently popular. I will pull out 3-4 photos and then create my own landscape - using the reference only for general shapes and shadows. I have always enjoyed an impressionistic approach - it allows the subject matter to be defined - but leaves room for the viewer to add their own spin on the image.

***Maureen, tell us about your choice of paper. I read that your entries for this year's show were created on Rives BFK?***

I have used Rives BFK for my monotypes and like its smooth but dull surface and the abuse the paper can take. I also like to use tan paper because it equals a toned canvas and gives me a middle value to start with. I then develop my lights and darks in the composition. I have been experimenting with other surfaces, but continue to feel comfortable with Rives BFK.

***Based on your bio, in the artist section of the OPS site, you write that you have studied at the Academy of Art, Western Illinois University and the Art Institute of Chicago. Can you elaborate and tell us what in your formal education influenced you the most? In other words, can you share something about some of the most important lessons that are still with you today as it relates to your art? The art colleges you attended all seem so different.***

Most of my formal education was at the American Academy of Art, which included life drawing every day and gave me a good concept of composition. The others expanded my vision to embrace the abstracts and rhythms of life. One's ability to draw well makes it easier to set down a composition quickly and proceed to the real fun stuff of placing your insights and emotions on paper.



***Casa de Pietra***  
Oil Pastel  
26" x 20"  
Rives BFK

***You call yourself an abstract naturalist. What drives your interest in nature and still life subject matter?***

The rhythms and variations of nature are ever changing, ever moving and never boring. Shadow, light, temperature, structure, view and your own frame of mind at any moment makes images ever evolving.

*I have asked these two questions to all the Artist's I have recently interviewed, so I want to be consistent and ask you the same questions as well. What first attracted you to the oil pastel medium, and what made you first pick them up?*

My first introduction to oil pastel was several years ago - George Shipperley was giving an oil pastel demo at the DuPage Art League and afterwards he allowed us to play with his pastels. The versatility of the media intrigued me and I immediately liked the buttery consistency of the pastel. I loved that I was able to draw and paint at the same time (what great multi-tasking!). I found that learning to layer one color on top of another to achieve color values was interesting and challenging. It was also interesting that during one of the first shows in which I had entered an oil pastel piece, one of my friends turned to me and said, "I think you have found your media." It was such a great compliment.

*Do you create in other mediums other than oil pastel?*

Yes. I took up printing monotypes a number of years ago and my favorite subject matter is non-objective/abstracts and florals. I paint with brayer rollers and wide brushes and don't allow myself to pick up any small brushes and enjoy the happy accidents that occur when splashes of solvents are added. And Oil... I've always loved the variety of color one can mix and the smell of the pigment. I also keep my hand in figure drawing and work in conte crayon, or soft pastel, but mostly lately in oil pastel.



*Pretty Peonies*  
Oil Pastel  
14" x 10"  
Rives BFK

***You seem to be very experienced with showing your work and have also been successful at being recognized and winning awards for your artwork. What advise can you give those of us just starting out with art fairs, and other art competitions?***

Paint what you love and let your heart be your guide - and keep at it. Enter all the shows and competitions you can and listen for ways to improve your presentation. I have kept up my drawing skills during my career as a graphic designer and art director and have entered shows as time and commitment would allow. It is a great ego boost to win awards, and it is interesting to study who did win and why the judge might have thought that particular piece was superior. Remember, your work is viewed with the history and background of the judge, which may be different than yours.

***Are you able to work on your art full time or are you still working as an art director/designer?***

I am still working as a graphic designer. When I started in this field, one of the things I wanted to do professionally was to be able draw in my work and come up with ideas, which has worked for me. I would find a way to get myself to a life drawing workshop even if I had a busy commercial load. Fine art has always been my therapy. I am sort of like a caterpillar now, re-emerging into the drawing and painting aspect of my life - because I have plans of shifting my workload to concentrate on my fine art.



***Spring Presence  
Oil Pastel  
10" x 14"  
Rives BFK***

***Working in oil pastel, as we know, is a very versatile medium. Can you tell us what you enjoy most and/or dislike the most about working in the medium?***

I love the fact that I can paint and draw at the same time in addition to using additive and subtractive techniques to achieve color and composition. It is easy to clean up after a painting session and the media is easily portable. I have a lot more experimenting to do with the media and that is a happy thought!

I most dislike the need to frame my oil pastels with glass, since I've found no better way yet to present my completed paintings.

***What brand of oil pastel do you prefer using?***

I use primarily Holbein, because of the wide color selection. I like the "buttery feel" of the pastel and also use the Sennelier Grandes because they can be mixed with the Holbeins. I do have a number of Van Gogh, Caran d'Ache and Cray-Pas in colors that I cannot find in the others. Occasionally I use the small Sennelier for finishing accents.



**Winter Vista**  
Oil Pastel  
18" x 14"  
Rives BFK

*Can you offer some information about your technique?*

*I am particularly fond of your color pallet and look forward to seeing the creative line work you layer into each piece. The many layers create continuous enjoyment and keep me engaged in the work for quite a while.*

I start with a quick drawing to establish my composition, and then block my basic color choices. I try to make my first color layer "clean colors", in other words, colors I might want to scrape down to later. I use a combination of additive and subtractive color techniques and will often scratch down to my initial colors. Res-A-Gel or Liquin is used to blend the first layer of color pigment into the paper surface. I determine placement of my lights and darks and then layer color for my desired composition. Most of my very dark accent strokes are added about mid-painting. I like to use wavy lines to create direction. If I find myself concentrating on making small fussy little changes, it's time to take a short break and then revisit my image later because I am in danger of losing the movement I hope to capture. I try to simplify shapes. When I become too detailed, I find that enthusiasm and emotion leaves my painting. Typically I try to complete 75% of a painting in one sitting.

*Thanks again Maureen for your time. Is there anything else that you would like to add at this time?*

I am just beginning to explore what I wish to do subject wise, and try to challenge myself with a variety of subjects. I am greatly honored that you have chosen me as an artist of the month candidate.

*I appreciate your efforts to show us your wonderful talent for creating such beautiful oil pastels.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Sharing your Art & Skills-**

by Ann Tucker

### ***Art groups and the internet-***

As I've wandered about the internet I've come across an interesting development, virtual art groups. Groups of artist (who have medium, subject or just love of art in common) coming together to share their art and their skills. There are a number of websites, both forums and groups, where artists can share their thoughts. These sites are great for getting advice, critiques or just kudos on your work.

These sites are also a way to help others who are struggling with techniques.

*(Continued on next page)*

Here are a few websites that I've enjoyed visiting:

<http://www.wetcanvas.com/>

This is a large forum which is broken down into forums for mediums and subjects. An Oil Pastel sub-forum is located within the Pastel Forum at <http://www.wetcanvas.com/forums/forumdisplay.php?f=148>

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/pastelpainters/>

This is a Yahoo group for Soft & Oil Pastellists. They are mainly soft pastellist but are a small and friendly group.

<http://forum.artistsnetwork.com/>

This forum site looks like it was started by Artists Magazine earlier this summer. Because it is new, it is still small but growing.

If there are any other art or medium related websites that you would recommend, please send me an email at [newsletter@oilpastelsociety.com](mailto:newsletter@oilpastelsociety.com)

### ***Oil Pastel Society Discussion Group-***

As a way to help and encourage each other in our use of oil pastels, and as a way to get to know one another; we are thinking of having a members-only group on Yahoo. Most local art groups meet together in a room once a month to share, help, encourage, and learn from each other. Since we are spread out through the internet, we cannot all meet in one geographic location. A discussion group seems like the internet equivalent of a meeting room in the local town library.

Both in looking through members gallery pages as well as some emails I've traded with members for newsletter articles, there are a lot of members I'd like to get to know better. Although most members can be contacted by email, I have been hesitant to just send an email and start chatting. But in a discussion group, I would not feel that hesitation to ask what technique someone used to create a certain painting. A discussion group would be a great way to get to know other members of the OPS and perhaps to make the OPS feel more like a local support network of artists who use the same medium.

What are your thoughts on having an OPS members-only discussion group? Good idea? Bad idea? Would you participate? Please send me your thoughts on this.

[newsletter@oilpastelsociety.com](mailto:newsletter@oilpastelsociety.com)

### **Visit Sennelier's shop in Paris**

Last week NPR, National Public Radio, in the US did a piece on the Sennelier art supply shop in Paris. This shop is where the Sennelier oil pastels began. Here is a link to the written version of the NPR article accompanied by photos.

***NPR : Art and History Intersect at a Paris Shop***

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5581725>

## Visit to a trade show

by Ann Tucker

### *A meeting with the makers of Cray-Pas -*

This month I received an invitation to meet with 2 members of the marketing team from Sakura of America, Peter Ouyang (Vice President of Product Development and Marketing) and Julia Reed (Marketing Assistant/Marcom Specialist). Peter and Julia were in Chicago to attend the Craft & Hobby Association (CHA) trade show. I spent some time with them discussing oil pastels as a fine art medium and the next generation of oil pastel artists. Sakura was the inventor of oil pastels, creating Cray-Pas in 1920.

[http://www.gellyroll.com/company/craypas\\_history.html](http://www.gellyroll.com/company/craypas_history.html)



Ann Tucker, Peter Ouyang & Julia Reed at the Sakura booth

Sakura now makes a family of oil pastel products for the full life of an artist. They have Junior Artist as the inexpensive, entry-level oil pastel for young artists. Next they have Expressionist for the growing artist and student. Then they have Specialist for the professional fine artist. With Peter and Julia's help, in a future issue I will discuss the differences in these products and some ways to tell if an oil pastel is a professional grade.

*Wandering around the trade show floor-*

Since I was at the CHA show I spent a few hours wandering around the exhibit floor looking at all the display booths. This show was for craft and hobby manufacturers and distributors to show their products to store owners. The largest number of products was aimed at the scrapbooking hobby. Although I like to put my photos into simple albums, I save my creative energies for painting. But it was still a lot of fun to see all the new products available.

While I was wandering the aisles, I came upon the Pentel booth. There I met Mark Grove, National Account Manager for Pentel Arts. Mark showed me some interesting watercolor-filled brushes and some watercolor crayons. These crayons called Aquash are a new product in the US market. They are to be sold in a kit with a brush with a water reservoir in the handle. I thought that this might be an interesting kit for doing sketching on vacation or for doing under-painting for oil pastels. This product is not yet available in the US market. I am curious to see how this works for vacation sketching.



The other product new to the US market will be oil pastels. I did a quick try of these on some paper and found a smooth coverage. How they would work for a full drawing, I don't know. But since I'm always on the look out for more varieties of colors, I'll be watching for these at my local art store.

\*\*\*\*\*

And don't forget, Cafe Press has items for sale featuring our beautiful OPS logo:

<http://www.cafepress.com/oilpastels>

This canvas bag can easily hold most supplies needed to take your oil pastels out for some plein air sketching.

Or keep it empty in the car to use as a grocery bag for carrying those heavy soda and milk bottles that try to rip the plastic grocery bags.



## Future Articles


Many of our best articles, demos and tips have come from members. If you have something of interest that you would like to share, please send us an email. Even if you don't think what you have to share could be a whole article, sometimes it can be a starting point for an email conversation which then can turn into an article. There are only a few of us working on this newsletter and it is very easy to run out of ideas. So..... If you have something interesting that you would like to share, please send us an email at: [newsletter@oilpastelsociety.com](mailto:newsletter@oilpastelsociety.com)

*Ann Tucker, Newsletter Editor*

One way that all of you can help to make the Oil Pastel Society more visible is by placing a link from your personal website to the Society's home page or you can link to your artist gallery from your homepage. Feel free to use the new society logo as a graphic on your links page! Below is the reference and the logo which has been downsized. Copy and paste the reference into one of your web pages and download the graphic and upload to your site.

If you have a new email address, please notify [membership@oilpastelsociety.com](mailto:membership@oilpastelsociety.com) so that our records can be updated and you don't miss out on any of the news!

## Your OPS Staff

	<pre>&lt;a href="http://www.oilpastelsociety.com"&gt; &lt;img src="opslogolink.png" border=0 width="200" height="64"&gt;&lt;/a&gt;</pre>
--	--

*Some paintings from member gallery pages.....*



*Sunny Morning at Sand Dunes Park*  
Christophe Cardot



*Wolf Prairie*  
Jennifer Wambach