

THE Oil Spiel

July 2006

2006 Oil Pastel Society Show "Versatility"

A big congratulation to our show award winners.



"Best of Show"

"Wooddale Fall" by Thomas K Mammen

"First Place"

"Full Moon" by Marilyn Brandenburger

"2nd Place"

"Blue Symphony" by Marie T Harris

"3rd Place"

"Three Sisters" by David Berridge

"Sakura of America, Award of Excellence"

"Risk" by Chris Price

"Versatility Award"

"Royal Hibiscus" by Stephanie Neely

"Honorable Mention"

"Waiting For Sushi" by Ann Tucker

"Exotic" by Virginia Tupper

"Night's Sentinels" by Kent Whitaker

"Winters Remembered" by Clemmie King

"Ms Minnie" by Desiree J Sterbini

"Palm Tree - Costa Rica" by Rebecca McConnell

"Giverny Musings" by Maureen McKee

"Gypsies" by Elaine Juska Keeley

"Patagonia II" by Rosemarie D'Alba

"Untitled" by Charlotte Moore

"Rosie's Gaze" by Shelley Schoenherr

The Oil Pastel Society is proud to present its Second Annual Members' Show, "Versatility", consisting of 101 entries from 54 Society Members. Here is the link to our online show.

<http://oilpastelsociety.com/2006Show/versatility.html>

A Statement from *Susan Bennerstrom* - *Awards Judge*

I thoroughly enjoyed jurying the Oil Pastel Society's On-line Show, and I was excited to see the range and depth of work being done in this wonderful but under-appreciated medium. Oil pastel is a medium still in its infancy. Artists have benefited from centuries of experimentation in oil paint, watercolor, ink, soft pastels, and other materials, whereas in many ways we are pioneers – inventing our own techniques and modes of expression with these sticks of oil and wax and pigment. Congratulations to all of you not only for making such fine work, but also for being your own trailblazers. Congratulations as well for submitting yourselves to the jurying process – always a nerve-racking adventure, but a necessary one in the life of an artist.

Judging a show such as this one is an inspiring as well as slightly distressing experience – I carefully viewed each painting many times, and wished I could have included more than eleven in the Honorable Mention list. The top awards took their places rather quickly, but each of the remaining paintings had at least one element that made it stand out.

The paintings that continued to hold up over the course of many viewings were the ones that combined good composition, excellent use of materials, interesting concept or idea, and a fresh approach. Even the most traditional subject matter can be turned into a wonderful painting if the artist looks beyond the obvious and brings his or her own soul and unique way of seeing the world into the work. Mammen's *Wooddale Fall* is a perfect example of this notion: the complex composition incorporating a riot of colors and elements could have turned into chaos, but instead it makes a brave and harmonious statement. Mammen doesn't shrink from experimentation, and boldly makes use of line, rhythm, and color. Brandenburger's *Full Moon*, Harris' *Blue Symphony*, and Berridge's *Three Sisters* also exemplify all of these elements, but in very different ways. Neely's luscious *Royal Hibiscus* demonstrates how versatile oil pastels can be, Tucker's *Waiting for Sushi* is full of energy and Hopper-esque atmosphere, and Price's surreal *Risk* is seething with ideas.

Thank you again for this opportunity to view some stunning work!

Susan Bennerstrom
June 18, 2006

You can see Susan Bennerstrom's work on the Davidson Gallery's website:
<http://www.davidson galleries.com/artists/bennerstrom/bennerstrom.html>

For winning the "Sakura of America, Award of Excellence"; Sakura of America, maker of Cray-Pas oil pastels, will send Chris Price a set of Specialist oil pastels, their top-of-the-line, artist grade oil pastels.



<http://www.gellyroll.com/products/pastels/specialist/specialist.html>

Welcome to the Oil Pastel Society!

New Professional Members:

Andrea Faundez

Shirley Bernstein

Ed Maskevich

New Associate Members:

Leila Kirkley

Rimme Serena Singh

Featured Artist of the Month

By Carol Zack

Katherine Simmons



Studying Katherine Simmons's oil pastels on the OPS website recently is like a breath of fresh air. I was immediately taken with the articulate way she handles the medium to get the effect of a natural environment.

I was particularly interested in her ability to be so consistent in both oil paint and oil pastel, so I decided to learn more about her, and how she creates such consistent and stunning landscapes.

Katherine has had considerable training in the arts, and has also worked at a few corporate jobs before launching a full time art career. She has been featured in several art magazines and shows her work throughout the New England area. When she isn't painting or showing/selling her work, she is busy serving on several recognized professional art organizations and also makes time to teach oil painting and oil pastel workshops.

I put together some questions I hoped would provide some of the answers I was curious about regarding her beautiful oil pastels. She graciously took the time to share her thoughts, and I gladly pass them on to you, the OPS membership. Please take a moment to visit Kathy's website at www.katherinesimmons.com (or use the link she provided on the OPS site) to find out more about Kathy's vision for painting, and the techniques and skills she has acquired that compel her to paint quiet seascapes, and luminous landscapes.

I think you will agree that Kathy is an outstanding artist whose sensibilities can be enjoyed by many but especially appreciated by those of us aspiring to someday control the oil pastel medium as well as Katherine Simmons.



***"View from Nott Island"
Oil Pastel on
Wallis sanded paper***

Katherine, I see you work in both oil and oil pastel, and seem to approach the look and feel of your art in much the same way with both mediums. How do you achieve such a consistent look and feel using both mediums?

It took a while for my work in both mediums to become consistent. It was just a matter of making a commitment to working in both. After trying to force consistency – and it looked it – I decided that it would happen over time by just working back and forth between the two media and that I had to be patient.

What factors determine when you will work in oil or oil pastel?

Being a full time professional artist, I often make my decision based on what I need for an upcoming show or to replenish a gallery exhibit. On a purely artistic level, I like to work in oil pastel when I am trying to achieve subtle and varied layers of color. This is particularly effective when my subject is marshlands or fields.

When did you decide that oil pastels were a viable and important medium to work in, and how long have you been working with oil pastels?

I discovered oil pastels in November 2001 – it's kind of an interesting story of serendipity. 2001 was a long show season for me and by the time the year rolled to an end, I was in a rut with my oil painting. So, I pulled out a set of oil pastels that I had bought two years before. When I had worked with them earlier, I was unsatisfied with the results. But, I thought, "I need a vacation from the oils. Nothing is going to happen here but it will be a nice change of pace to give them another go." For whatever reason, things clicked and I got hooked on them. I guess the moral of that story is to stay open to your artistic muse.



**"Winter Along Wickham Road"
Oil Pastel on Wallis sanded paper**

Is there a particular brand or type of oil pastels that you prefer using and why?

I use Holbein Oil Pastels almost exclusively. The reason I like the Holbeins is that they are the only oil pastel brand that offers five values of each hue. Their range of hues is ideal for the landscape painter. They have a nice creamy feel without being goeey. I also include a few Sennelier Oil Pastels because they offer some beautiful and subtle colorful grays that I haven't found in other brands – grays that tend toward green, violet, blue, etc.

Do you ever combine the use of oil and oil pastels in your art work?

Yes. On large pieces where the initial lay-in is tedious with oil pastel, I will do an under-painting in oil. The under-painting is not detailed and often includes complimentary colors to those that will ultimately be visible in the finished piece. In other words, I am using this oil painting stage to set the design and to tone the painting field. Then, I use oil pastels to build and mold the forms – the oil painting part represents only about 10% of the finished piece.



***"Marsh in Bloom"
Oil Pastel on
Wallis sanded paper***

I see you prefer to use a gessoed linen board over other surfaces. Can you tell us why you prefer this surface over others? Is it the same for your oil paintings?

The linen boards I use are made with fine textured, portrait grade linen. I started to use linen because I have so much of it – being an oil painter as well. I love the way linen adds to the textural layering of color that excited me about working in oil pastel. Over the past year, I have been using Wallis sanded paper much more frequently. Kitty Wallis deserves a medal for this product, it's fantastic. It's rugged and it will take a lot of layers. Wallis sanded paper is also primed to allow use of oils paint or turpentine on it. In short, I use surfaces that allow me to fully exploit the oil pastel medium because I like to blend my oil pastels in the early stages using a bristle brush and turpentine. You can't use turpentine on paper or unprimed surfaces without compromising the archival integrity of the surface.

Your imagery is of a literal nature that suggests atmosphere. How much of your work is done on location vs. in the studio from memory or photos?

I do both studio work and work in plein air. Plein air work is absolutely invaluable to me. It trains my eye to really see and quickly capture the essence of a scene. It trains my memory for those times when I am back in the studio working from field sketches and photo references. No matter how good a photographer you are, photographs are a poor substitute for what you see in person on site. I should add that this memory work is equally important when one is painting on location. After the first half hour or so, you are working from memory because the sun and the clouds do move.



"Summer Exuberance"
Oil Pastel on
Wallis sanded paper

What artist's inspire you and why?

Among pastel artists, I love the work of Elizabeth Mowry and Albert Handel – Mowry's for the atmosphere captured in her work and Handel for his interesting compositions and use of abstraction. Among oil painters, I love Richard Schmidt's work. His work looks as if it just landed on the page without effort. I also love the way forms emerge from all of this marvelous brushwork. His edges are just great. Among non-living artists, I can't find much better inspiration than John Singer Sargent and Joaquin Sorolla.

When you begin an oil pastel painting, how do you start the process? (I am looking for an answer that talks to the way you compose, and develop the surface, the tools you use etc. to achieve the desired result, and how, or if you approach it differently from oil painting.)

I usually complete initial sketches done with a Sharpie felt tip marker to nail the structure of the composition. Selection of the size of canvas that suits my subject (horizontal, vertical, 12 x 24 or 8 x 10, etc.) is also worked out in the sketching stage. Then I transpose this sketch to my surface using gouache (as described above when I use oil paints on larger pieces). Sometimes, I skip this step and just use oil pastel to do my initial lay-in. If I am using oil pastel for this lay-in, I blend the pastel into areas of color that emphasizes light and shade. From that point on, I don't do any blending – it's strictly layering of color using the sticks of oil pastel.

How long does a painting typically take you to complete?

Small paintings (8 x 10, 9 x 12) usually take me a couple of hours or half a day, whereas a large painting (20 x 30 or 30 x 40) might take me two or three days to complete. Let me quickly add that after I think I'm done painting, I give myself some time to look at the painting over several days (sometimes weeks) to consider whether additional work is needed and to complete any touch-ups or corrections.

Do you find that clients prefer one medium over another (oil paint vs. oil pastel)? When selecting your art for purchase, are your oil pastels as important as your oil paintings to the client?

It really depends on the client. Some only like my oils and some only like my pastels. Out there in the marketplace, I have to say that oil paintings are more easily sold than pastel. It shouldn't be that way, but it is. The most consistent complaint is the glass and the reflections created. As a result, I use the best museum glass which is not etched (for non-glare) but has very little glare compared to plain picture glass.

When you complete an oil pastel painting, how do you protect it and get it ready to show or sell?

I try to get finished paintings into frames under glass as soon as possible. If they won't be framed right away, I tape a sheet of glassine (looks like wax paper and is available in art supply stores) over the piece to protect it from dust and accidental smudging.

Generally, I don't fix my work. There is only one fixative I know of that is designed for oil pastels. It is made by Sennelier and is available in a pump spray bottle. It adds a gloss to the finished work, but doesn't change or darken the color. I've used it on some small pieces but find it tedious to use on larger work. If it were available in an aerosol spray can, it would be much easier to use.

I see on your website, that you offer classes in oil painting? Do you ever have the opportunity to teach classes in oil pastel?

Right now, I offer one day workshops in oil pastel. The workshop assumes that participants have art-making experience in other mediums. So the workshop focuses on how to get started with the materials, experimenting painting on different surfaces, correcting mistakes, using the materials in an archival way, etc. I don't have a workshop planned for the summer but will probably offer one in the Fall here in Glastonbury, CT where I live. Groups can also commission me to teach workshops in their area.

You've had extensive formal training in the arts. Was there any one thing particularly that influenced or encouraged you to paint the way you do today?

I can't point to any one thing. It's probably more an accumulation of things – formal training, workshops with pros like Charles Sovek and Robert Scott Jackson, always looking at the best art and learning how they solved particular problems, painting alongside other painters and learning from them. But probably the most important thing is to "just do it". Painting is like playing the piano – the more you do, the better you'll paint and the less you do, the worse you'll paint. Painting is as much a physical, eye/hand coordination skill as it is an aesthetic skill. And, the more you paint, your style will emerge just as surely as the way you sign your name emerged over time.



**"Spring Breezes"
Oil Pastel on
Walls sanded paper**

Member News

Patricia Isaac was accepted into the South Shore Science Center's annual juried show "Beyond the Garden Gate" held in the Vine Gallery at the center in Norwell, MA. She also received an honorable mention for her piece. And she was also accepted into the Oil Pastel Society of Maine's annual juried show.

Featured Artist of the Month Update: Jack Brumbaugh (June Artist of the Month)



After featuring Jack Brumbaugh in last month's newsletter, one of our members continued to be intrigued with Jack's technique for preserving his oil pastels. Thanks to Sandy Jomini, who wrote in to find out more, we decided to go back to Jack to get the details. Thanks again Jack for taking the time to describe your process for protecting and finishing your oil pastels using Kamar Spray Varnish, (see June 2006 Artist of the Month issue), and thanks Sandy for asking the question so we may all benefit by learning a valuable technique for working with oil pastels.

Question from Sandy Jomini

In the June newsletter you featured Jack Brumbaugh; his work is great, good choice. In one of your questions you asked him about protecting his work with varnish and/or fixatives. You asked when to apply it and I didn't see the answer. I am guessing that many of us would like to know so rather than lots of e-mails to him, would you please check about the timing and let the general membership know?

Thanks.
Sandy Jomini

Answer from Jack Brumbaugh

- To start with, the only restriction I place on when to apply the varnish is when I'm sure that I'm done with the drawing (painting).
- I don't wait for a drying period, but keep in mind that I don't use Senneliers, which are quite oily, and I do very little blending.
- It's probably a good idea to add here, that for anyone considering this method, they should try it on something that they don't care too much about.
- Kamar is a spray varnish and I apply it outdoors. I zigzag horizontally and then vertically about eighteen inches away from the surface. It dries quickly, depending on the weather, and I wait ten or fifteen minutes between coats.
- After three or four coats, I gently test the surface with a clean rag or just my fingers to see if the pigment is stable. If not, I add another coat. I've been using this varnishing technique for about ten years and haven't seen any bad effects with the passage of time. I have to stress, again though, that we don't all use the medium in the same way, and that I suggest some experimentation on something that's not important to you, before you try it on a valuable drawing (painting).

I hope this helps, and if you get anymore questions, I'd be happy to email or discuss the process directly with anyone.

Thanks again,
Jack Brumbaugh www.jbdrawing.com

Member Lindsay Olson (Chicago, IL, USA) attended a demo given by one of Savoir-Faire's top representatives of oil pastels. Savoir-Faire is the USA distributor of Sennelier. Lindsay shares her experience with us.

Dick Blick In-Store Demo by Savoir Faire Representative, Camille La Point-Lyons

Reported by Lindsay Olson

Five participants gathered around the table on the second floor of Blick's Art Store in downtown Chicago on Saturday June 10th. Camille began her demonstration with a history of oil pastels and the Sennelier family. Her techniques follow the old masters oil painting using a limited palette. She chose a single, light colored neutral to block in the lights and darks with very light, squiggly lines. She gave us soft press Fabriano paper and a whole box of 50 oil pastels to share as we followed along.



Camille choose a light colored compliment of the first color to develop the shadow areas. She explained how you can, when working this way, layer lights over darks. She used white to cool and lighten some areas and the pastels themselves to blend areas. She prefers a painterly look so does not use blending tools or stumps. (No Res-N-Gel either).



She blocked in the trees (not using any green at this point) and began to lay in the reflections of the trees and the bridge shadow on the water. She applied long vertical strokes to make the water shapes for the trees using the same colors she used for the trees themselves. Then she applied some of her sky color to the water area that showed between the tree shapes using horizontal lines. She then used a lighter value to create gentle lines of light (contrasting against slightly darker shades) in a horizontal direction.



Tree shapes were not specific to any kind of trees and she continued developing them as irregular lines. Her light values were sprinkled on the light struck side of the trees and she used darker values both to anchor the trees to the ground and develop shadow areas within the trees themselves. At this point, she did use several cool and arm greens that added a definite tree color the foliage. She added the tree trunks and branches last so that they had a lost and found appearance among the foliage.

In laying down the sky colors, she used Ronald Searle techniques to squiggle in the colors. Camille said when you lay down a thick horizontal layer of pastel it flattens the sky. Using several pale values and scribbling in the sky gives it more depth.





Lindsay
and
Kelsey Olsen



As you can see, we
all had a great time.
Kelsey and I met
WetCanvas.com
members Serena and
her aunt Jaspal as
well as Serena's best
friend.

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



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 so that our records can be updated and you don't miss out on any of the news!

And don't forget, Cafe Press has items for sale featuring our beautiful OPS logo and can be seen at:

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

Your OPS Staff



```
<a href="http://www.oilpastelsociety.com">  
</a>
```