

THE Oil Spiel

November/December 2006

Note from the Editor:

This is a combined November and December issue. After trying to put together last year's December issue in the middle of a busy holiday season, we decided that going forward we would do a November/December issue. The August/September issue was a special case and thank you for your understanding on that. So from now on, the newsletter will be published eleven times a year.

Since this is also the December issue, I'd like to share a Holiday painting image we received last year from Alexander Semenko. If you make a holiday painting, please send an image in. We'd love to showcase it in next year's newsletter.



Congratulations to Connie Chadwell! Read about her news in the Member News section. To paraphrase Neil Armstrong... One small step for Connie, a giant leap for all oil pastellists.

Some of you may recall that I got married in September. The day was perfect! It was an outdoor ceremony with the last nice day of the season.



We recently got the photos and there are a lot of paintings waiting to be created. Now that many photographers shoot in digital, often you can purchase the digital files. We did this and they also signed over the artistic copyright to the photos. I can use them as subjects for my paintings and not worry about copyright infringement.

Ann

Welcome to the Oil Pastel Society!

New Associate Members:

Susan Ross Donahue

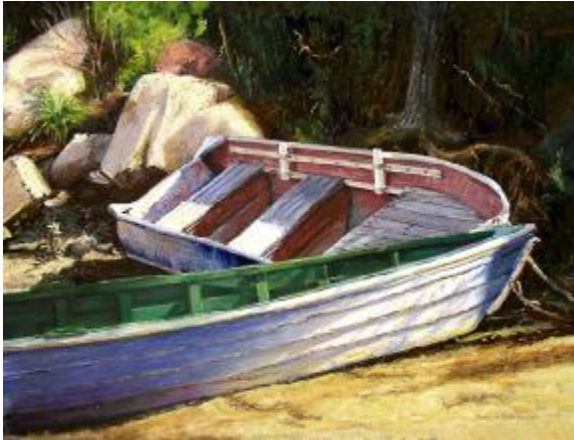
Anima

MEMBER NEWS



Connie Chadwell's oil pastel drawing, "The Model's Musings" (which won First Prize at the 2005 Arkansas Pastel Society show), will be included in the **North Light** book, *Strokes of Genius: The Best of Drawing*, to be published in the summer of 2007.

Also, one of her oil pastel portraits won First Prize in Pastel at the Kerrville Art Club show in the spring of 2006. The Kerrville Art Club is a regional art club in Kerrville, Texas. Some of the other artists liked the way her oil pastels looked so much that they bought oil pastel sets for themselves.



Patricia Isaac's oil pastel "Beached on Damon Point" was one of 40 works juried into the North River Arts Society's Calendar and Exhibit competition. The exhibit ran from Oct. 20 to 29 in Marshfield Hills, MA. The calendar months were announced at the opening reception and her piece will be featured in their 2008 calendar for the month of April.



Shelley G. Schoenherr

Third Place Professional Drawing, Michigan State Fair Fine Art Competition, for *Rosie's Gaze*

*Honorable Mention, Lac Ste. Claire Fine Art Fair, for entire body of work presented.

*Best In Show, 2006 68th Annual Grosse Pointe Artists Association Member Exhibition for *Keys Eye Chart*

Shows accepting Oil Pastels

30th Annual Art on Paper @ the Maryland Federation of Art, March 9-April 15, 2007.

Slide deadline January 9th, 2007. Juror: Helen C. Frederick. All media on or with paper. Up to 2 entries \$25, additional entries \$5 each. Awards \$1500.

Send SASE to MFA, Dept. AOP-OPS, PO Box 1866, Annapolis, MD 21404 or email mdfedart@gmail.com with subject line AOP-OPS.

WORKSHOPS & DEMOS

A Portrait Workshop in Oil Pastels

By Ann Tucker

This month I was lucky enough to attend a beginning portrait workshop given by OPS member Carol Zack. (Carol also writes our outstanding Artist of the Month articles.)



Girl With Camera

Carol does wonderful, color-filled portraits often using a visual mixing technique. This technique lays strokes of color near each other on the paper and allows the viewer's eye to do the mixing. This makes much more vibrant and lively paintings.



Carol was teaching a workshop at the Hoffman Estates Park District Art League (in Illinois), a group of artists in varying media. (For more info on the group, visit their website. <http://artleague-hoffmanestates.org/>)

After giving the group some background about oil pastels, Carol passed out supplies and had everyone try their hand at oil pastels.



Photo courtesy of Zackartistry.com

Then Carol put up an interesting, very out-of-focus image.

We were not to worry about what it was but put in the large light and dark shapes with the side of the OP. And to lay down color blocks to capture shape.

Then we used ResNGel to spread the pigment out for an underpainting.



In stages, the slide was brought into view as we also refined the shapes in our paintings.

Carol has often used this technique of turning an image upside down and blurring it in teaching classes. She says it causes the eye to see shapes rather than the object.

After an hour of working, all the students put their paintings together on the floor to see how differently we all approached the lesson.



Samples of students' work with limited color choices and short time frame.

These works are very unfinished as there was not enough time in the short workshop. But most of the students liked how Carol showed them to start with the big shapes and finish with the details.

They also walked away with a better understanding of the oil pastel medium.

For more information about Carol Zack's workshops in the Chicago area, contact her through her website. <http://www.zackartistry.com>

You're Doing What With My Toothbrush?!

by Bonnie Clement, Kittitas, Washington



Instructions for serious artists whose chosen medium is oil pastel have been scarce. Therefore, is it any wonder that those of us with a creative bent are driven to experiment with different methods and tools? Sometimes we are successful—and at other times we have a disaster.

I have fibromyalgia which makes certain repetitive activities painful and difficult, such as working the oil pastels into the paper without the use of solvents or additional oil. First I tried using an electric eraser, but it didn't give me the results I was looking for. Then I tried the polishing head on a Dremel® rotary tool, but that clogged up too quickly with the OP and became ineffective. Well, I thought, Colour Shapers® worked well manually, why not cut off one of the tips and attach it to the Dremel®? Great idea!—a new toy for the cat to chase.

One day my husband's battery-powered, rotary toothbrush developed a crack which made it unsafe for use around water. Voila! A new tool to try! Since that day, a couple of battery-operated toothbrushes and several used replacement heads are included in my OP supplies.

A Step-by-step Demonstration

Each year for the past ten years my husband and I have spent at least a week at a guest ranch in the Stehekin River Valley in Washington. This remote valley can only be reached by boat or float plane up 55-mile long Lake Chelan, or by hiking over Cascade Pass from another valley. There is one public satellite phone at the Landing, and no radio, television or internet at the ranch.

Days for most guests are spent hiking the numerous mountain, lake and river trails, topped off by ranch-cooked meals and serenades by frogs and the nearby river. Heavenly!



Since hiking was now out for me, I took a mini-studio to the ranch this year, along with several photos both my husband and I have taken in previous years. I spent the better part of the week under tall pines and big leaf maples working on *The View from Rainbow Loop Trail*.

I chose a couple of digital photos my husband took at the top of the Rainbow Loop Trail a year ago. As you can see, I used white artist's tape to section off the area I wanted to paint.

For my support I used 9-inch by 12-inch Arches cold-pressed watercolor paper. With a water-soluble colored pencil I lightly sketched in the main shapes.

The photo depicts a clear blue sky, but I wanted this to be a morning picture with some sunrise colors in the sky and water. I put down a light layer of Senelier white over the sky, lake and distant mountains. Over the sky I scribbled areas of pale blue and purple.





Now comes the part children, and adults, love to watch. I took the battery-powered toothbrush and began to blend the colors, working them into the grain of the paper. One word of caution: if you are doing a demonstration with children present, be sure to tell them to (1) ask their mother first and (2) not brush their teeth with the brush afterwards.

As sunrises in Eastern Washington tend to be almost as colorful as sunsets, I added some pale orange to the clouds and lake. At this point I also blocked in varying shades of blues in the mountains and various greens for the trees and grassy slope in the foreground. I used the brush until it was too large for the smaller areas, but most of the hard blending was done by that time.





The warm sun made me sleepy, so I took a nap. By the time I got back to the painting, the oil from the OPs had absorbed into the paper, making it nearly impossible to work in the pigments with the Colour Shaper®. Linseed oil is acidic and will in time turn paper yellow; therefore, I don't use it. I did use a tiny amount of inert mineral oil to soften the OPs to a workable consistency.

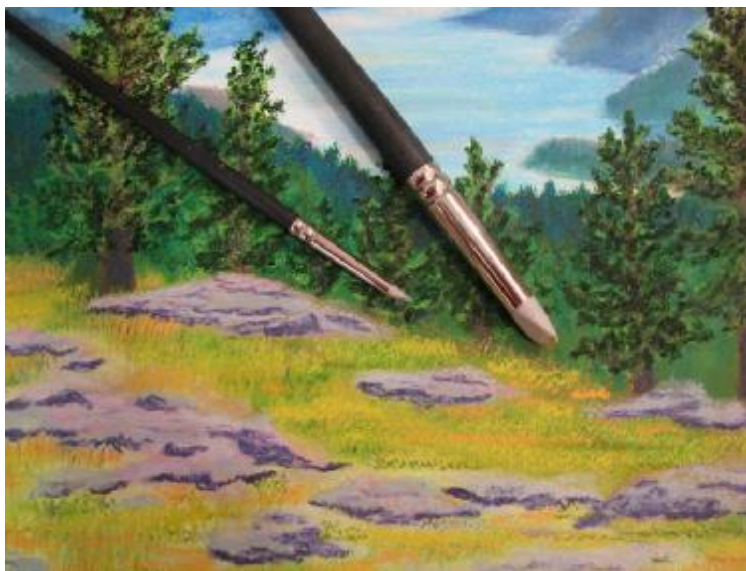
Next I concentrated on the mist over the lake and between the mountains. I put down a light layer of Holbein white and added the tiniest dots of pale blue, purple and orange. Using a circular motion and a light touch, I blended the colors with a Colour Shaper®, adding more OP as needed until the desired effect was achieved.



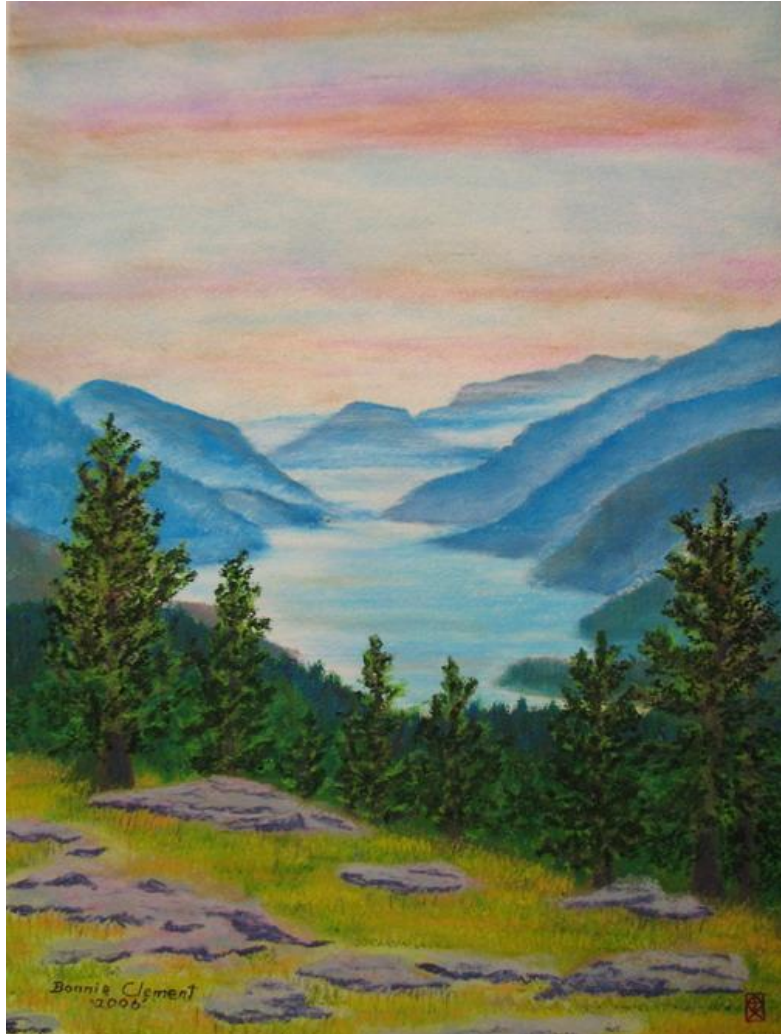
With the sky, mountains and water essentially done, I began putting in details in the mid and foreground. Objects become more detailed as they come closer to the viewer, as seen in the trees on the slope beyond the rocks and grass in the foreground.



How did I get the fine blades of grass in the foreground? I put down horizontal bands of the various late-summer grass colors--yellow green, ochre, olive green and orange. Using the sharp edge of a small Colour Shaper®, I pushed the colors upward to create the appearance of grass stems, letting some of them overlap the rocks.



A few final touches and the painting was ready for my signature and symbol.



The View From Rainbow Loop Trail
Oil Pastel on Arches cold-pressed watercolor paper
2006



A word about the symbol I place on all my paintings: I believe talent, whether in art, music, teaching, acting, sports, or anything else, is a God-given gift. When I took a Chinese painting workshop, I learned the red stamps, called chops, found on oriental art was a statement about who the artist was and/or what he believed. I believe in God the Creator and by using this symbol I wish to honor Him with my art.

Past Oil Pastel Primer lessons are now available on a public page of our OPS website.
<http://www.oilpastelsociety.com/pdfarchives.htm>

Featured Artist of the Month

Rita Naras Kreitz

By Carol Zack



I learned from Rita's Bio on her website <http://www.mcs.ca/artworks.htm> that she studied fine art and archaeology at the University of Toronto, and later enrolled in George Brown College also in Toronto, to study commercial art. There, she focused on basic design, drawing and other fundamentals. Her first love seems to be drawing, and when you study her work, her drawing skills for capturing lifelike images and architectural detail is very apparent. But over the years Rita has discovered and incorporated oil pastels, which seems to have become a bridge between her knowledge of drawing and painting. The results are very articulated well designed compositions. I became fascinated with her work when I realized she was using colored pencil over her oil pastels! My curiosity took hold and I just had to dig a little deeper to learn more about her technique. I asked her to share her process for creating, as well as her artistic vision.

You tell us in your Bio, Rita, that you were born in England and later moved to Ontario and studied in Toronto. What brought you to Canada?

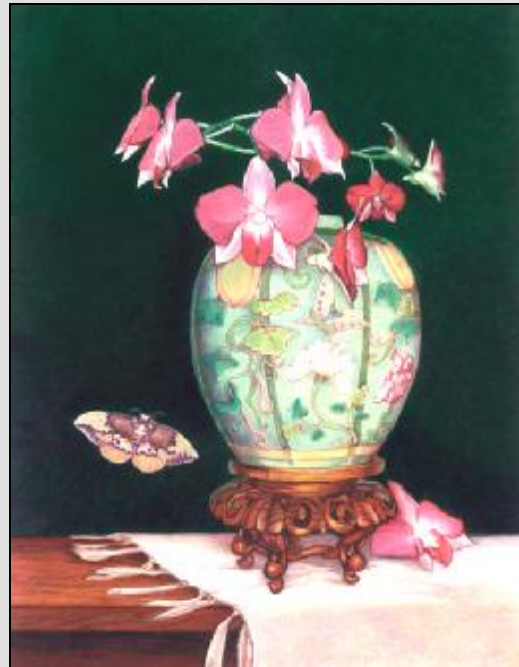
Actually, I had no choice in the matter. I was less than 1 year old. My parents had to leave Lithuania after the Second World War, and they stopped in England for a few years before coming to Canada.



The Healer
2001 Size: 12 x 15"
Oil Pastel on Peterborough
Illustration Board

Rita, when I reviewed your website, I see that you've created three distinct subject matter categories, Still life, Fantasy, and Town and Country. Can you tell me about these three categories as it relates to your way of expressing yourself? Which category of paintings are you more successful selling and/or exhibiting and which subject matter do you enjoy creating the most?

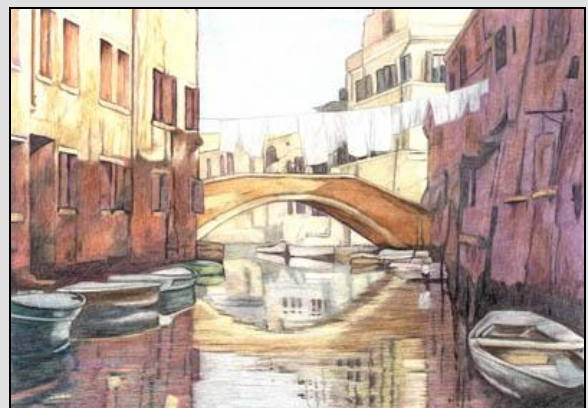
I have trouble restricting my subject matter. Many years ago, I was creating only wildlife art, and landscape painting evolved naturally from that. I was especially interested in horse and carriage scenes, so many of the landscapes were really cityscapes. Because of my choice of medium, it took days to complete a piece and I worked at home from photos I had taken. So I decided to try still life because I could work inside with actual objects. Fantasy work was similar because so much of it comes from my imagination. Painting landscapes is very enjoyable, but creating fantasy art or surrealistic still life settings is much more challenging and creative. You have to love what you paint because certain subjects like surrealism and fantasy do not sell well to the general public, and may be decorating your walls for a long time. The public seems to like uncomplicated scenes best, but that's OK because I enjoy them all.



Dendrobiums
2003 Size: 18 x 14"
Oil Pastel on Peterborough
Illustration Board

Do you work on location to create your landscapes? The choice of subject matter seems so romantic and "European" in feeling. Are these real places or taken from your imagination?

I used to work on location when I was very young and used oil or acrylic paint. When I switched to coloured pencil and later to OP, I found it was impractical because it could take days or weeks to complete the painting. I take plenty of photos whenever I travel and then use the photos as is, or combine elements from many photos to create a new scene. I have been to Europe, but I find that many places in North America can be "tweaked" to give them that European feel.

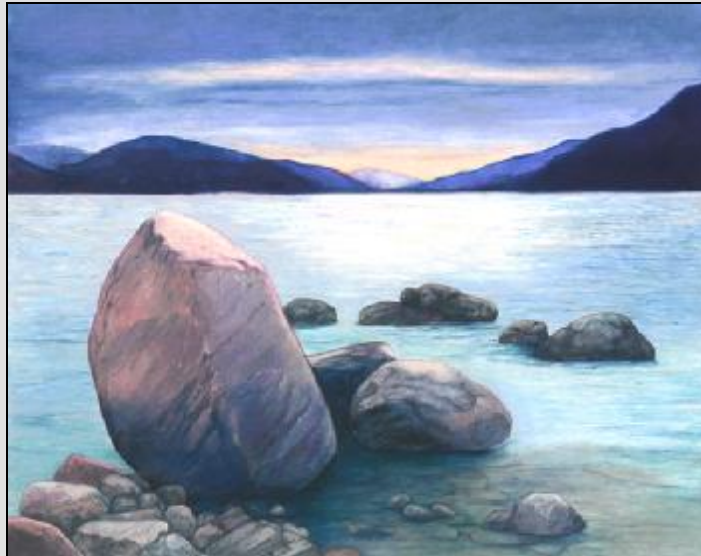


Venice
2001 Size: 11 x 15"
Oil Pastel on Peterborough
Illustration Board

After studying your work on the website, I am compelled to ask about your painting technique. You tell us in your Bio that you use 90% oil pastel and the detail is sharpened and enhanced by coloured pencil. Please explain how those two mediums work together. I would think the coloured pencil would not work with oil pastel, unless it was laid down first. And many of us have been taught to add detail near the end of a painting, so it seems like a contradiction to those of us who were taught to put the details in last.

The oil pastel is laid down first and coloured pencil on top. I have often read that coloured pencil will not work over oil pastel, but I have not had a problem.

I think it depends on how thick the OP is. My pastel application is rubbed and blended very hard so that there is no obvious texture. Then I use a sharp Prismacolor pencil for detail.



Solitude
2005 Size: 16 x 20"
Oil Pastel on Peterborough
Illustration Board

When did you actually start using oil pastels, and what drew you to them? With your need for articulate execution, did you not find them clunky and unrefined to use? What brands of pastel do you use and what tools do you use, if any, to achieve the careful detail I see in your paintings?

Quite a while ago, I was creating some very elaborate pieces in black and white with pen and ink, using a Rapidograph technical pen. Eventually, I had a craving for colour, so I switched to Prismacolor pencils when I saw a fellow artist using them. These were also very intricate and labour intensive. I started looking for a faster way to fill in backgrounds. I found an old box of OP's that my husband had stored in a closet for years. Even though they were old, they worked just fine and I got hooked on that instant shot of intense colour that made my coloured pencils seem pale by comparison. It took a lot of experimentation but gradually I could phase out the pencils and increase use of the pastels.

I developed a method in which I use masking film to achieve the clean shapes and lines you see in my paintings now. For instance, if the subject is a bowl of flowers, I cover the drawing of the flowers and bowl with a piece of adhesive masking film, and cut away along all the edges of the flower and bowl, using an exacto knife, leaving the background exposed. I paint in the background. Before removing the film from the flower, I further outline various colours or shapes within the flower grouping. Then I paint in the exposed areas again and blend into the edges of the film with a paper stomp or plastic eraser. The plastic eraser doesn't erase anything but makes a really good blender. Eventually, all the bits of film come off and I may have some rough edges. These I fill in with coloured pencil. I also use Walnut Hollow oil pastel pencils. You may not have come across these because they are not sold in art departments but in woodworking crafts.

My favorite OP's are Holbein. I will use Sennelier if there is a particular colour that is not available in Holbein, but they are a little too slippery for my purposes and I prefer the firmer Holbeins. I don't use solvents, but a useful tool is the colourless blender that comes from most felt tip marker manufacturers. The small tips get into tight spaces and corners and are good for blending small areas. The masking film I use is the type used by air brushing artists, but you don't need the high tack – medium tack is fine.

My support has been illustration board from the very beginning, because that is what I used for coloured pencil and still works well for OP – easy to handle and frame – a medium texture.

Your landscape and still life works are especially structured, quiet/still, devoid of people and very controlled. They seem highly edited visually and compositionally, as well as have a carefully chosen color pallet. Can you tell us what drives your creative thoughts? Did your training in commercial art help to create your very consistent imagery?

I would like my artwork to convey a serene and peaceful attitude no matter what the subject. Compositionally, I wish to achieve a Japanese-like simplicity and stillness even though the subject matter may not be oriental in nature. I guess this reflects my desire for my artwork to be a little retreat from the complexity and chaos of the world.

My landscapes do not usually contain figures because I don't want to tell too much of a story. The viewer can more easily find himself in the picture if he is looking for stillness and a little quiet.

This may not always be the case in my fantasy pictures, which could be more complicated. But I don't usually like to explain them. I prefer that the viewer form his own conclusions.

My commercial art training was good for teaching technique and discipline. Imagery is something that dwells inside and pops up at the most unexpected moments.



Sunlit Corner
2005 Size: 14 x 18"
Oil Pastel on
Peterborough
Illustration Board

Looking at your work on your website, I can't tell just how smooth and devoid of paint (oil pastel) texture they are. I seem only to be aware of the careful design, the separation of shapes, as well as the beautifully soft color pallet. How is the oil pastel applied? Heavy or thin?

The OP may be applied in as many as 4 or 5 layers to achieve the desired colour. But then it is blended very well, as mentioned before, with a paper stomp or white plastic eraser. The eraser is easier to use because it can be cut into shape with an exacto knife. The blending produces a very thin layer in the end, with not much texture. The blending obliterates all the white dots on the board from showing through. A rough board requires a lot of hard rubbing. Too smooth a board doesn't hold enough layers of OP.



**Spinning Wheel
2005 Size: 20 x 16"
Oil Pastel on Peterborough
Illustration Board**

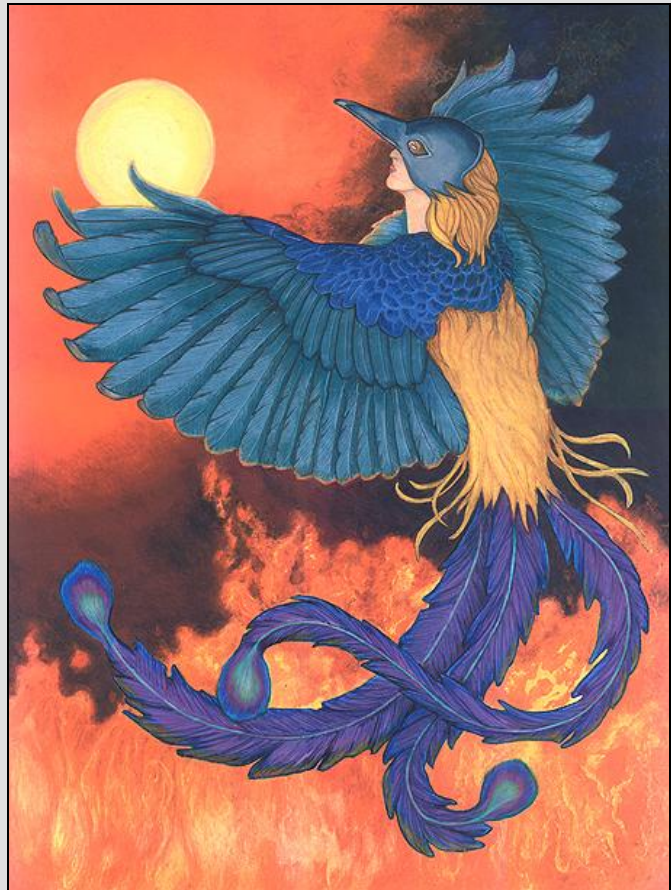
Tell us about your Fantasy works. What drives these images?

If you go to my website, you will see that it is a part of a larger site called Vital Spark that my brother and husband are producing. This website contains a lot of information about spirituality, New Consciousness subjects, natural therapies, etc. and I was recruited to do some artwork.

My fantasy artwork is a result of this other project and a fairly new development. These are the most difficult pieces to create. Sometimes I would be assigned a topic and after an intense period of mind searching, I would start pulling together objects and reference photos that somehow melded together.

Other times I happen upon an interesting photo or situation that inspires me and then I keep adding or subtracting elements that seem to fit.

Often I don't know what I'm doing and when the painting is finished I say, "Aha! That's what it means."



Rebirth
2004 Size: 24 x 18"
Oil Pastel on Peterborough
Illustration Board

You often donate works of art to charity. What advice can you provide those of us who are interested in doing the same?

I have rarely sought out venues for art donations. When I exhibited at art shows, I was approached by organizations that felt that my artwork was appropriate for their cause. If I was interested in their charity, I would be very happy to contribute. If you are not invited to donate but wish to do so, investigate all of the silent auctions and charity events that you are interested in that are happening in your town. Many organizations will be glad to take your donation.

I assume you protect your paintings under glass like most other oil pastelists. Any special tricks or advice you can provide when it comes to presentation that you can share with us?

When I phased out my coloured pencil art, I was tired of having to deal with framing with glass. This was 6 years ago. There was some controversy about whether or not to use fixative on OP. I didn't want to use glass so I decided to use some fixative to protect it. In my experience, the fixative did absolutely no harm to my paintings and some have been hanging on my walls without glass all this time. However, fixative did not do a complete job of protecting the art. Some oil pastel could still come off if touched. So a couple years ago, I read that some oil pastel artists were using varnish. I gave it a try. I am using Krylon Kamar Spray Varnish, which I believe is the same one mentioned by Jack Brumbaugh in a previous interview in this newsletter. The finish is absolutely beautiful. There is a slight gloss and it actually imparts a texture that is very similar to an oil painting. I use 3 coats. I know that this is a very controversial subject among oil pastelists, but I have searched out information from other artists who have been using varnish for many years to protect their OP's with great success. Perhaps, because my pastel is not thick, it works for me. I have not been using varnish as long as some but have seen no deterioration at all. I know there is a varnish made especially for OP, but rather difficult to obtain, I think, only from England over the internet. This is still a new and growing medium. Hopefully through experimentation and communication, we can all benefit from everyone's experience.

Thank you Rita for giving us a glimpse into you and your art. Your approach and techniques inspire us, and seeing your work shows us all just how flexible oil pastels are in the creative process.

Rita Naras Kreitz continues to work as a full time artist in Toronto, Canada. To see more of her work, you can click on this link to her website.

<http://www.mcs.ca/artworks.htm>

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



"Shelties" by Shosana Avramovitz



"Patagonia 2" by Rosemarie D'Alba

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!

Your OPS Staff

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>



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<a href="http://www.oilpastelsociety.com">  
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For your Holiday List?

By Ann Tucker



I just received the latest catalog from Judsons Plein Air Outfitters. The newest member of their Guerrilla Painter line is a Cigar Box design. In the catalog, they show this box holding 2 of their foam lined pastel trays.

If you are a collector of art toys like I am, take a look. This may just need to go on your list for Santa!

<http://judsonspleinair.com/>