

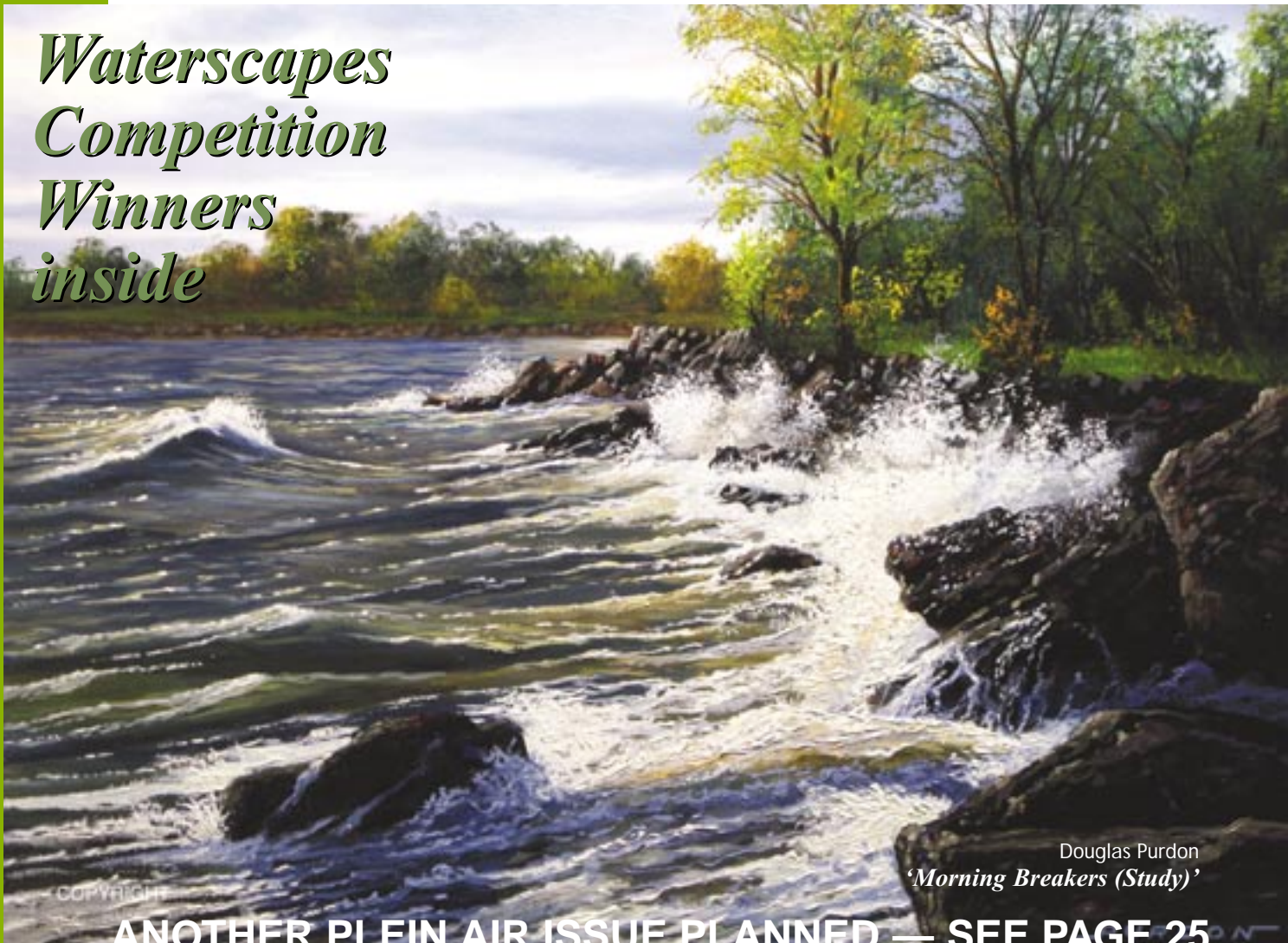
15

Sept/Oct
2009

CANADIAN *Brushstroke* MAGAZINE

Serving the Canadian art industry • www.brushstrokemagazine.com

*Waterscapes
Competition
Winners
inside*



Douglas Purdon
'Morning Breakers (Study)'

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ANOTHER PLEIN AIR ISSUE PLANNED — SEE PAGE 25

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Toronto
area
artists and
CDN/US
celebs
featured
on TV
show
'Star
Portraits'



Artist
spells
out
his
watercolor
process

Grant Fuller



Publisher's Corner

September 12 saw the first episode in a Canadian television series featuring Toronto-area artists (see story on Page 24).

We couldn't be more excited. To finally have art featured in a reality television series is a hugely wonderful thing for every artist in Canada.

The series (on Bravo!) runs 13 episodes, featuring three artists per episode. In each show, the three artists paint a celebrity. At the end of the show, the celebrity chooses his or her favorite portrait that they feel best represents them.

The first show featured artists Daniel Hughes, Laurie McGaw and Allan Harding MacKay. Each of them had an entirely different approach. Since reality television is based on the interest level of the audience, it was good to note that in the small group we got together to watch the show, there was a huge amount of discussion of the artists' works, their processes, and which portrait they felt should be chosen.

If that kind of audience interest is consistent with other viewers, we expect that the show will continue in future seasons. More exciting than that is that Bravo! viewers will be getting an education in how art is created, what makes a good portrait, and how, even among really good art pieces, there is still the element of personal taste that factors in. In other words, they can feel free to love the art they love - they don't have to feel intimidated because they don't 'understand' the art, or because they don't understand or even care about a verbose description that tells them why they should like it.

Although we would have liked to have seen more national representation rather than just Toronto-area artists, that's what it took (budget-wise) to get a show like this off the ground. A television series is expensive to produce. Without getting a first series done, a second season can't be a reality, so if filming close to home kept the budget under control and allowed this showcase of portrait art to happen, then we're in total support. Let's hope that the Canadian audience loves the show and a second season is created, enabling artists from many other areas in Canada to be featured.

Who knows, maybe someone will even decide to do another art reality series featuring other subject matter.

Whenever good Canadian art is featured, we're in full support. Bravo Bravo!

ANOTHER PLEIN AIR ISSUE PLANNED (SEE LAST WORD on PAGE 25).



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contents

4 Letters

Readers comment on 'What does the world define as an artist?'

5 Waterscapes competition winners

Canadian Brushstroke Magazine's competitions attract excellent artists from all over the country. See our latest competition winners on Page 5.



14



Art Supply Store Mural Causes Big Stir in Cowtown

A Calgary art supply store 'wrapped' its business in fine art but it's come under fire by city officials.

17 BC artist spells out his process

Grant Fuller is a very successful watercolor painter and he shares his skills with beginner and intermediate painters in his book: *Watercolor A to Z*..



23 Artist battling to exhibit images from Afghanistan

The Canadian military's complete disinterest in Karen Bailey's images that they sent her to Afghanistan to attain sparked a scathing editorial by Ottawa Sun columnist Earl McRae.



24

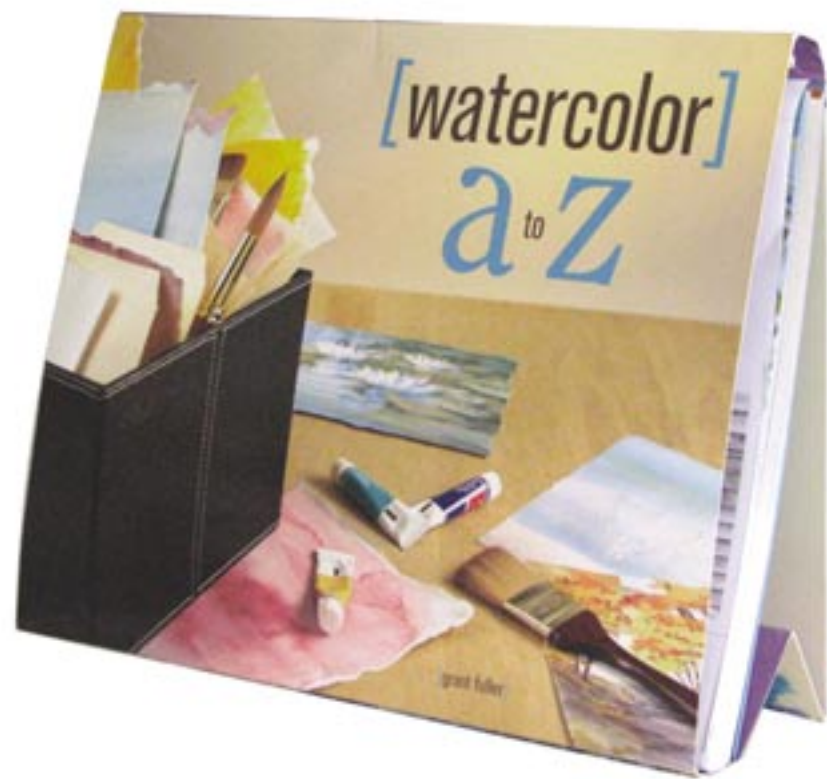


Star Portraits

Artist Daniel Hughes' portrait was chosen by Elvis Stojko in the first episode of new art reality series 'Star Portraits.'

from

a to Z...



artist spells out his watercolor process

Comox, BC artist Grant Fuller has spent almost his entire life building his art skills. Although he had some bumps and hurdles along the way, he has become a very successful watercolor artist and also has a book, published by North Light books, that helps budding artists learn his process.

When Grant Fuller was just practicing his ABCs and doodling on scrap paper, he never dreamed he'd be writing and painting in his recently published book - Watercolor A to Z.

"I started drawing when I was four years old. My parents really encouraged it. Any family occasion they gave me a pencil and a piece of paper." He laughs, saying the encouragement was probably because it kept him busy while the adults visited.

"I never had very good art instruction through school. I just kind of fumbled around with it. At one point in high school I thought maybe architecture was the way to go because it was the only thing with drawing." Then someone told him there was such a thing as commercial art and it would allow him to have art as a career.

"So that's what I started to look at. It required going to art school, so off I went to art school at the Vancouver School of Art. I still felt it was not very good commercial art instruction and I wanted to create art for a living. In my fourth year I started to do freelance work."

"I went around and got a few crummy jobs, but I wasn't a natural born genius when it came to art. I still didn't realize that the best of the best practice a lot."

"After art school I went off to Toronto because I knew that the previous grad class in Vancouver was still walking the streets looking for jobs." The market, he believed, was in Toronto at the time.

"So I ended up selling shirts for about nine months for Robert Simpsons."



ABOVE: **PARADISE MEADOWS** • Watercolor, 22 x 30"
BELOW: **LANTERNS** • Watercolor, 11 x 15"

After that he managed to get a job in a small ad agency that did packaging. "It was a terrible job, putting lettering on bread bags, etc, but it got my foot in the door."

When he found out Simpsons Sears was looking for artists for their catalogue, he applied. At the time, every page had to be drawn up by hand. They hired Fuller because his portfolio included a lot of fashion/figurative work and the company was desperately looking for figurative artists. There were lots of artists who drew things like refrigerators (then called hard line work), but not many who did figurative (called soft line work).

"They hired me but I still wasn't any good. They offered to help. They gave me three weeks to improve and told me they'd put me with anyone I wanted to work with in the company."

So Fuller picked a mentor and got down to business. "He was amazing. It was the first time anyone had ever shown me how to do it. Once you can see art done, what a difference that makes."





ABOVE: SAINT ANDREW'S • Watercolor, 15 x 22"

BELOW: LAST FALL • Watercolor, 11 x 15"

"Three weeks later I got the job instead of getting fired. I spent the next 17 years there."

In 1983, it was time to move on. He saw the work of artist Jack Reid (deceased Aug. 24, 2009 - www.jackreid.com) and it changed his life from that point on.

He took a workshop from Reid. "This was the first time I'd ever seen anyone do a painting. It was a whole new medium to me (watercolor). It was all oils in art school. I just fell in love."

Although he had loved his job and had climbed way up the corporate ladder by that time, Fuller decided he had to "take the big jump."

"I quit, sold my condo in Toronto and moved to Victoria, BC in 1984."





OLD DOOR • Watercolor, 15 x 22"

It had been too difficult to work all day and then paint in the evenings. "In order to get good enough to earn a living, I would need to paint full time".

Reid visited Fuller in BC and did workshops there and they painted together. They became very good friends and Fuller was very inspired by Reid.

In March of 2003, Reid had triple bypass surgery. He had 38 people who had booked and paid to attend his upcoming workshop in Newfoundland in June. They wouldn't have been able to get their airfare back if he had cancelled.

Fuller agreed to do 'backup' for Reid. Fuller did the workshop and Reid did only morning demos because he tired quickly.

"That was the first time we tried a joint workshop. We sent samples of my work (to the artists signed up for the workshop) because they didn't know me from Adam."

The workshop turned out to be so popular they did many more workshops together.

His own workshops became very popular also and Fuller says his book "really accelerated that."

He now does approximately 12 workshops a year, rang-

ing from one to five days in length, with six to 18 students per class.

Two other artists who inspired Fuller are US painter Charles Reid (www.charlesreidart.com) and Australian painter Joseph Zbukvic (www.jzbukvic.com).

Fuller advocates learning from other artists. "My best acceleration was when I found someone who was really good and was willing to share that information."

"Take professional workshops. Something to get you to the next level."

Fuller paints in watercolor both indoors and outdoors.

"Outdoors you don't have the same kind of controls. You battle wind, dust, bugs... I always take photographs for reference.

As opposed to working in the studio, he says "You do change your approach. I work more on dry paper. I'm more aggressive, more spontaneous. It's a sword fight with the painting almost. It adds a certain element of excitement."

Painting watercolors outdoors is a huge learning curve even for experienced artists, however. Fuller says to expect early struggles. "You need to learn."

When beginning every painting, Fuller starts with a drawing. "My philosophy is that you have to have a plan for a painting. The pencil, in watercolor, is really a planning tool."

He says he doesn't get overly detailed because "I don't want it to be a coloring book. I just want to know where things will go. It's a greater finish with a good plan."

"I use mechanical pencils nowadays, with a B lead. "It's hard enough not to break easily but soft enough it doesn't scratch the paper."

Fuller usually starts his paintings with wet paper first. He habitually uses 200 lb. TH Saunders

paper. He likes it because he can tape it down without it stretching or buckling. He tapes it to lightweight Coroplast, which means he can carry several at a time when he's painting on location.

He fashioned himself a palette with large wells that fits inside a tackle box because he found that most travel palettes wouldn't accommodate his one-inch brush.

Synthetic brushes are his preference. Although they don't swell like natural hair, "the synthetics now are very fine so they hold a lot. They grab the liquid between the filaments." They are very cost-effective also, he adds.

When working on wet paper, Fuller says that every brush load he uses more pigment and less water. "You can get marks that stay firm but soft on the edges." That is good, he adds, for clouds, wet sand, snow, etc.



FAVOURITE FARM • Watercolor, 15 x 22"

Things he wants sharp and in focus he often paints on dry paper.

Only about a dozen colors are on his usual palette, and he prefers Winsor & Newton tube paint. For his grays he uses Cobalt Blue, Burnt Sienna and sometimes Cadmium Orange. His greens are all mixed. He starts with Phthalo Green. "It's so pure it will mix the full range." He adds Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna and or Cadmium Orange.

His favorite black is a Winsor Violet and Burnt Sienna mix.

Other colors his palette includes are: Cadmium Lemon Yellow, Cadmium Red, Permanent Rose and Raw Umber.

Fuller's book, *Watercolor A to Z* is published by North Light Books and is a recipe-style book. It sits on a table and the pages flip to allow readers to easily view the book while following along with each lesson. •



GRANT FULLER's paintings have won several jurors awards and have been featured in magazine and newspapers at local and international levels. Fuller lives in Comox, B.C. where he teaches, paints and travels to teach workshops. His watercolor painting instruction book titled "Watercolor A to Z" is available through the North Light Book Club, Amazon, Chapters and many other book stores. Go to www.grantfuller.ca for more information about his work and his book.