1/20/2012—Wissman

How to Submit a Book Idea and become an Author of a North Light Fine Art Book
North Light is an imprint of F+W Publications

North Light Books is always looking for talented artists who can share their techniques with our readers.

A. What Does North Light Look For?

1. We publish books about do-it-yourself fine art activities. We need ideas for books that will appeal to the person who likes to learn painting skills in ways that are easy to follow and fun.

2. We publish books with great examples of finished art. All of the artwork and step-by-step demonstrations in the book must be:

- inviting
- inspiring
- of high quality in artistic technique, instructional value and reproductive quality (all photography in focus with proper exposure)

The response of the reader should be "Wow, I want to do that!"

3. We publish books on a basic skill level. North Light books must interest beginners who like to spend their leisure time making art. The finished art, techniques and processes presented should appear to be well within the reach of what the average reader can do. Emphasis should be on relatively easy, fast, fun methods. Reader response should be "Wow, I CAN do that!"

4. We publish books that teach primarily with pictures and easy-to-follow step-by-step demonstrations, not just with words. Illustrations should be clear, instructive, easy to follow and of professional quality. You must build your book around demonstrations with twelve to twenty steps per demonstration that the reader can easily learn from to complete similar paintings or techniques that look good based on your instruction. The reader must be able to see the whole process by scanning the sequence of illustrations without even having to read the captions. In other words, the captions should support the art.

5. We publish books that fit our format. Our books are usually:

- 8 1/2 x 11 inches
- 128 or 144 pages long (though some trade paperbacks may be shorter)
- full color (though some may be black and white)

North Light, not the author, determines whether a book is hardcover, paperback or paper over board, as well as selling price.

B. What You Must Be Able To Do As An Author

1. Create great art and step-by-step demonstrations suitable for reproduction. The art and instruction in the book must be of high quality. You must submit the illustrations digitally, and according to our specifications. We will provide you with the guidelines on the types of files we require as well as how best to shoot your art. If you are not able to submit your art digitally, you must discuss this with your acquisitions editor on what other options may be available.

2. Shoot good digital photography of a step-by-step demonstration as you create it. This is a necessity for doing a North Light book, and we have sets of guidelines showing you how best to do this. Most North Light fine art authors shoot their own photography or hire a professional to do so. However, we may consider working with authors who are willing to come to our studios for a photography session.

3. Write clear, how-to instructions for step-by-step demonstrations. This is also a necessity for doing a North Light book. If you can describe in words exactly what you are doing when you are painting—including what *materials*, *tools*, *colors* and *techniques* you are using—you most likely have the necessary writing skills. We are not looking for stylish or scholarly prose, lists of anecdotes or travelogues—just concise, easy-to-follow descriptions of how to create paintings or perform techniques that are clear enough for our readers to follow. If your writing is logical and correctly ordered, we can do the rest, such as grammar, spelling and punctuation. However, our editors work with you and your project on much more than the details.

4. Work with editors. Once a committee accepts your proposal, you continue to work with an editor who helps you with the following:

- providing you with guidelines for producing and submitting your materials (this may also be provided to you before your proposal is accepted)
- answering your questions about how you should proceed
- helping you develop a page-by-page plan of your book for you to follow (this may also be developed with you before your proposal is accepted)
- establishing a schedule of deadlines for submissions (you will be asked to send finished chapters for review)
- reviewing and editing your manuscript and art as you submit them
- providing feedback within a reasonable time frame (it is not always possible to provide immediate feedback, since our editors work on several projects at one time)

Most of our authors are artists, not seasoned authors. However, the beauty of writing a North Light book is that you don't have to get everything perfect the first time (unlike, say, a brain surgeon) because your editor will help you make your book the best it can be. Usually, we do heavily edit most fine art books

in the interest of being most instructive for the reader. Your editor may cut text or ask you to provide more to ensure logic, accuracy, flow, etc. An editor may cut art or ask you to provide more to ensure good reproduction and instruction, North Light style, etc. We have a set of *North Light Standards for Fine Art Authors and Editors* that explains further the primary goals we have as editors and that you should have as an author.

5. Follow a detailed outline, clear page plan and all agreed-to project information for the book. Before you write or photograph anything more for a book, we plan exactly what will go in it, arranged in a logical order, so everybody knows what is necessary to complete the work. This makes gathering and producing the material much easier for you. It also lets us know what is coming and how long the book will be before we start work. We need authors who can write the books we need and know we can sell.

6. Deliver material on time. It is essential that you deliver finished artwork and writing on time in order to receive your advance payments and so that we can have your book ready when we can best sell it. You must be able to keep yourself on schedule from the beginning. Good book writing requires organization, discipline and applying the seat of the pants to the seat of the chair. Your editor will work with you on mutually agreeable due dates for submissions. If you do not meet deadlines, we may decide to cancel your book, which means that you will have to return any advances you have received.

C. What You Should Submit For A Potential Book Idea

1. Submit at least twenty high-quality examples of the artwork the reader would learn how to make in your book. We need to see at least twenty examples so we know your work is consistently good. It is important that you photograph the art you provide as you will photograph it for the book. This is especially important for authors who plan to photograph art themselves, so we can make sure the art will be acceptable.

2. Submit a definition of your book with a detailed outline/table of contents. It is best if you can establish a very specific "handle" or "big idea" to focus the book and give it a definite direction from the start. You may already have this. Whether you already have an idea for a book or do not yet know what your "big idea" is, write short answers to the following questions to develop your idea further:

- What is your book about? What medium, techniques, subject matter and point of view will it include?
- Who are your targeted readers? It must be suitable for beginners, but please define your audience further.
- How will the book teach the reader? In what form will you deliver the instruction? It must include step-by-step demonstrations, but it can also include projects or exercises for the reader to do; close-up details; case studies; artist profiles; before/after or good/bad comparisons; etc.
- What makes your book special and different? What will the readers find in your book that they cannot get in other books? This does not mean your book has to be startlingly new. Nevertheless, what features would it have to set it apart from other books?
- What makes you qualified to write this book?

Then make a detailed outline that shows you have thought your book through.

3. Submit a sample section or chapter (both art and writing) representative of the book.

Send all of the above to Pamela Wissman, Senior Content Director, North Light Books, F&W Publications, **10151 Carver Road, Suite 200, Blue Ash OH 45242, pam.wissman@fwmedia.com .** Though North Light publishes many types of fine art books, I am currently most interested in proposals on the following topics:

- Basic realistic drawing and sketching
- Mixed media
- Acrylic
- Oil painting for beginners
- Pastel
- Abstract art
- Watercolor for beginners
- Light-filled landscapes, gardens and/or village scenes
- Big reference books on how to paint
- Nature painting basics

D. What's Next

I assess your material for appropriateness to our publishing program. If it appears suitable, I work with you to develop the outline and chapter-by-chapter description of the content of the book further. We will also finalize how to present the material, i.e. step-by-step demonstrations, details of finished work, etc.

At this point, I will ask you to create a sample step-by-step demonstration consisting of all the steps involved in making one of your projects, along with captions telling what happens in each step. This will tell me how we can best help you with the writing and with acquiring quality illustrations.

Once we have a good detailed outline, page plan and sample demonstration, I will propose your project to a review board for approval. If approved, you will then negotiate a contract with one of our business coordinators. The terms of the contract will spell out the advances you will receive, the royalty payments and the due dates for art and finished manuscript.

E. What's In It for You as a North Light Author

There are many good reasons for publishing a book with North Light. We create the finest art instruction books available today and are the leading publishers of art instruction books in the U.S. Our books are in nearly every bookstore and art supply store in the U.S. and Canada. Publications such as *The Artist's Magazine*, *Watercolor Magic* and *Pastel Journal* also feature them. In addition, our books usually remain in print. We do not publish a book for only one season; our books remain in our catalog as long as there is a demand for them.

Creating a book takes time, effort and commitment. Nevertheless, it is worth it. Besides the obvious satisfaction and pride you will feel when you see your best work in print, there are other rewards.

1. It gets the word out and provides you with more credibility than anything else you can do. A book gives you more credibility than a videotape or teaching a class. A book gives you notoriety. Being the author of a book is a great way to publicize your work and to become known by a lot of fellow artists and instructors. A book with your name on it is good advertising!

2. You share your joys and discoveries with others. Not only do you share your joy in the process of making art, but you also make it possible for the reader to create beautiful things. There is no better way to enrich the joy of others than to share your discoveries and secrets in a well-written instruction book.

3. Publishing a book enhances your opportunities as a teacher. Authoring a book is a great way to reach potential students. If they like what you show them in your book, students will want to take your classes and see you work in person.

4. You make money. As the author and copyright holder, you will receive royalties on all sales of your book. Although you might not be able to retire early (or even quit your day job), periodically receiving a royalty check can be a nice supplement to your earnings.

F. How to Find Out More

If you have any other questions, please write to:

Pamela Wissman, Editorial Director
North Light Books
10151 Carver Road, Suite 200, Blue Ash OH 45242
pam.wissman@fwmedia.com