

February 1, 2002 Issue

The Joy Of Portraits



February 2nd is Groundhog's Day. A prognosticating rodent is the supposed final word on the season's weather. If he sees his shadow he will go back into his hole and we humans will have to tolerate six more weeks of winter. Well, I checked my calendar. Spring arrives on March 21st. That is six weeks and five days from Groundhog's Day. If Punxsutawney Phil does NOT see his shadow, does that mean Spring will get here in exactly 54 days? Someone, somewhere, a long time ago, made a tongue-in-cheek prediction, and it has evolved into a serious media event! Some folks actually take the groundhog, shadow thing seriously! (Which is o.k. by me) Perhaps in these troubling times we need some senseless light-hearted diversion to keep us distracted -- at least for one day. Happy Groundhog's Day!

Next Issue: Farms, Barns and Such

Faces are fascinating. Have you noticed that? Starting with our mirror image in the morning, and all through the day, we see people. As an artist, I see faces on a different level. In a child I observe the soft, smooth skin, wide innocent eyes, and small, dainty features. I mentally examine colors, lighting and how I would apply what I see onto canvas or paper using oil, watercolor, gouache or pastel.

I move on to character studies. What makes a particular face unique from all others on this planet? Is it skin tones? Is it facial expression? I study reflected light, hair color and style, and manner of dress, posture, and attitude.

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Then (with the models' permission), I paint portraits. Children are best captured in a moment of being natural. Since they are so animated, a camera is a valuable tool to define that instant when the child is relaxed and not "posing" for me. There is, of course, no substitute for, or short cuts to, the careful observation and numerous sketches of the subject. As I spend time and get to know the person(s), we both begin to relax and enjoy the experience. Children like to play "dress-up". Some of the most interesting portraits I have done are of those magical times.

Adults, also, intrigue me. They are more likely to tolerate the long sessions it takes to paint their portrait. I have learned in my thirty years of painting, that getting the idea down on paper or canvas quickly, puts everyone at ease. A particular tilt of the head, or twinkle in the eye, a direct gaze, a quirky smile can be brought out as the person gets used to sitting for me and relaxes in congenial conversation. Thus the personality comes through in the finished piece.

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I love to see the way light makes skin glow. I am enthralled by the essence of reflected light on cheek and jaw; the stark or soft shadows created by sunlight or lamplight. What keeps me coming back to portraits is the pure joy of painting people. The ability to create not only a likeness, but to capture the true depth of the person is a wonderful gift for which I am eternally grateful.

Carol Thompson

Featured Artwork

Watering Gramma's Flowers



"Visiting Gramma's house is always so much fun! She lets me play with her stuff and when she works in the garden, I get to help by 'watering grandma's flowers". I think she likes the dandelions as much as I do."

Oooh!



"In my big soft shirt and big floppy hat, I'm all dressed up to go outside to play. Oooh! I hope the wind won't blow."

Webmaster



"This is my Webmaster, creator of the way my art is presented here on my site. He is also my husband Ed who sat for me in our front yard under the lilac bush last summer. The painting is executed in pastel on Mi-Tientes paper and embodies all the principles of the way I do a portrait."