

March 1, 2003 Issue

The Industrial Landscape

I must be the most fortunate of all the artists that reside here in the Pacific Northwest. I have been blessed with the ability to paint and draw, and have the good sense to be married to a super fine computer guy, who guides my career and loves every minute of it! When I began to paint seriously in the early 1970's, my husband, Ed, saw to it that I was able to attend the art instruction classes that enabled me to advance in the direction I wanted to go. He made sure that there were materials and inspiration at hand, and to further my learning, sent me to the Oregon coast to study with seascape instructors, who gave workshops at the edge of the sea. When, in 1989, he was convinced that my career was ready to "take-off", he quit his job with the State of Washington to become my full time business manager. Together we did the "shows", printed limited editions, and placed my work on consignment in galleries and gift shops across the country. When technology caught up to me, we entered the world-wide-web. We have indeed looked back, but we never stop moving forward. Both of us are excited about the future, and keep taking advantage of all that the 21st century has to offer. So, expect new things from here. The best is yet to be!

Next Issue: It's All About People

Warehouses. Towers. Girders. Steam rising in the early dawn. The industrial landscape fascinates me. I grew up on a farm in north-central Wisconsin. My world was a landscape of trees, fields and forests. The closest I came to industry as a girl was the cheese factory, in town ten miles from home, where my mother worked for a short period of time. Even then, I did not seem to pay a particular attention to the whole theme. But somehow, the wail of a far-off train caught my ear. The plume from a distant factory's smoke stack rose on thin autumn air, to enchant the dreamer in me. I began to listen for the hum of traffic borne on chill, quiet winter evenings. Trucks. Airplanes. Trains.

The hustle of manufacturing twenty-four hours a day. My Dad was temporarily drawn away to work in a factory in Milwaukee, hundreds of miles from home. On weekends he would regale us with stories of the huge clanking machines that turned out goods for the insatiable consumer.

"Trucks. Airplanes. Trains. The hustle of manufacturing twenty- four hours a day"

After graduation from high school, I went to work in the nearest large city, Wausau, Wisconsin. (Home of Employers Mutual Insurance Co.). There I saw huge railroad yards and heard the clatter of trains that still intrigues me to this day. I had my first train ride. It was a rollicking, reverberating experience that left me with a life-long love of those mechanical beasts. The airport was in close proximity to the apartment house where I lived. Day and night, jets took off and landed with a roar, shaking the very foundations of the old Victorian. I still thrill to the sound of a jet plane revving up at a terminal, whether I am aboard, or sending someone off, or meeting an arriving flight.

Today I live in suburban Olympia, Washington.. Interstate 5 runs east and west a mere mile from my home. Long-haul trucks pound the route nearly continually. Some roar, some whine, some whirr as they snake along the curvy highway that ushers them from mighty city to small community and back again, carrying the lifeblood of American commerce. On long automobile trips, I have amused myself by counting the number of them in a short period of time. I have reached the conclusion that they are innumerable!

"Interstate 5 runs east and west a mere mile from my home"

It would seem to be, for an artist, a natural inclination to paint those things which captivate ones imagination. Still, it was many years before I began to explore the industrial climate of this great nation. Since taking up the media of gouache and pastel, I have eased out of the groove I was in (seascapes). I delight in capturing the steam from the stacks of a lumbering mill in the northwest, and the sinuous rails laid out before a train in California. There is the unique mood of a rain drenched factory in the heart of the Oregon hills. My goal is to again visit the huge industrial complex of the great cities of the Midwest. Think of it! Mile upon mile of belching factories in the heartbeat of the country; the rhythmical music of the trains leafing out on silvery branches of steel. The industrial landscape is every bit as entrancing to the heart of an artist as any field, mountain or stream.

Carol Thompson

Featured Artwork

Aberdeen Industrial



"On a grey rainy day that seems to hold even the plume from the stack of a distant paper mill on a horizontal level, the activity of an Aberdeen, Washington industrial area continues at a bustling pace."

A Time Away



"On the highway, through Eureka, California, in the thin daylight of dawn, you can get your 'morning coffee' at this

Railroad Tracks



"Fort Bragg, California is the home of the Skunk train. These 'railroad tracks' weave an interesting pattern in the area of the terminal."