

January 15, 2007 Issue

Stormy Seas



The wind continues to bluster outside my kitchen window. I feel fortunate that mine is not one of the few homes still left without power. I really don't enjoy being cold. I grew up in Wisconsin, and I can truly say: "been there, done that!" I prefer the grey, rainy days, whether it be drizzle or downpour. We have a lot of those days here in Washington State. In the last two months of 2006, we received record amounts of rainfall. I love it. How else will the trees, grass and flowers beckon visitors to this great Northwest?

Weather forecasters are promising "sun breaks" and temperatures above freezing for the next week or so. But the neighborhood cat has a secret. Her coat is thick and full, and she has a decidedly plump appearance which indicates to me that Winter is not going to go away quite yet!

The new seed catalogs are arriving en-masse to my mailbox. Let the wind bluster and the rain slant down. I'll be cuddled up on my kitchen window seat to dream of tulips, daffodils, lilacs and more.

Next Issue: Archival Prints on Canvas

Winter is a grand time to be walking the beaches of the Pacific Northwest. From Washington to Northern California, wind, rain and yes, even snow has delighted the hearty traveler that visits these shores. For the first time in decades, Haystack rock near Cannon Beach, Oregon wore a snowy cap just a few weeks ago. It was a testament to the uncertainty of the weather. Even the salt air was not sufficient to keep off the chill of the season. Photographers and artists were thrilled to be able to see this phenomenon and record it for future reference.

"Photographers and artists were thrilled"

Soon the temperatures moderated and the snow disappeared. The winds returned. Huge rolling breakers smashed themselves into foaming fury. I stood in awe as I observed the ferocity of the rushing ocean. Captivated as I was, I knew instinctively that this force of nature was one to be respected and experienced from a distance. My husband drove the truck to high ground. I pulled out the binoculars and we watched the power of the sea with wonder and admiration.

The stormy ocean is one of my favorite moods to depict with oil on canvas. The tempestuousness of the open sea is an intriguing challenge. Enormous amounts of rolling pillows of foam bob along the shoreline, driven by fierce winds. The sky is dark and foreboding. Soon copious amounts of rain will drive the seals, sanderlings, gulls, and people to shelter to watch the scene from the protection of warmth and height.

This, then is the opportunity I wait for. To observe the roiling sea. To lock it in my memory to paint later in my

studio. The storm soon unleashes its fury upon beach, rocks and buildings. I make notes. I draw quick sketches. I memorize the mood, the colors, the shapes and size of the stormy sea.

After the storm, as we wend our way back to Olympia, I sit and ponder the awesome beauty of the scene just passed. A rainbow stretches before me as the late day sunshine captures the last mist of the maelstrom as it dissipates.

"A rainbow stretches before me"

I set up a large canvas on my easel, spread out the luscious colors of oil paint onto my palette. I gaze at the blank whiteness. Holding a brush loaded with a grey mixture, I attempt to recall the lines, shapes and mood of the storm of which I had so recently been an intimate part. I begin with the horizon, slightly bumpy due to the heavy wave action. The waves are high and rolling. Here will be a huge splash of pure white foam on the rocks. Here will be the foreground turbulence, the lacy foam patterns so intricate it is nearly ephemeral. I sketch the scene and begin to paint. There is a somber cast to the whole tableau. I shall brighten the setting with the highlights on the top of the breaking waves, and finish the pageant with a slight hint of sunshine beginning to break through the heavy overcast. And so, the painting forms in my head and is transferred to canvas.

I have experienced a wonderful adventure. I have painted my impression of the sea that stormy day, and I have committed it to canvas to share with the world. Life is good.

Carol Thompson

Featured Artwork

"Grey Day"



"The hardy people of the Pacific Northwest are spending time to go 'clamming in the bay' at Newport, Oregon. From Senior citizens to young children, this is a healthy family activity."

"Neptune Rules The Deep"



"Neptune rules the deep. His mighty trident stirs the sea. Seafarers tremble at the power and majestic beauty of the troubled depths. Even the heavens seem to respond to the turbulence with rolling, hurrying clouds. Be of good cheer. Calm shall soon be restored as the Roman God of the sea is placated and returns to his throne beneath the waves."

"Approaching Storm"



"Dark ominous storm clouds are gathering in the distance over the sea. Gulls sweep the waves before the 'approaching storm', to gather a last meal before the first raindrops blow in on the edge of the squall."