

# Special



**There are as many reasons for painting landscapes as there are artists. But one thing they have in common is their pleasure in sharing the special places of nature.**

*"Palmscapes," left, by Peter Pettigrew draws the viewer into the open landscapes of south Florida, an increasingly scarce commodity the artist wants to preserve on canvas. Published by Seven North Ester 316 on reader service card.*



Artists paint landscapes for much the same reasons that collectors purchase them: Landscapes are familiar, they are attractive...and the subject matter is vanishing! Each year more open land is bulldozed for development, and that motivates artists to capture scenery on canvas.

That's certainly the case with Peter Pettigrew.

"I'm drawn to the subject because I feel it's a diminishing commodity—if you can call it that," he says of the open landscape. "Here in Florida, you can literally watch huge tracts of land being developed before your eyes. I can't call myself a tree-hugger, but I feel sorrow when a pine forest is taken down. That's why I like to get out in nature and bring it all back in a painting."

That same feeling is echoed by Peter Sculthorpe, who cites similar reasons for being drawn to landscape painting. "A lot is just the disappearance of it," he says. "So much of our landscape is being paved over, although a lot of my



# Places

By Maryann Ondovcsik

attraction has to do with privacy, solitude, and quiet. I feel very fortunate that I can portray these qualities in my work."

Like many artists, Gerald Hjelm is drawn to his subject matter because he loves the outdoors and paints images of an unspoiled world that is fast disappearing. "In my paintings, I guess I'm trying to preserve it in some way. Here in Minnesota, we have a lot of woods and lakes and rolling hills—plenty of material for me to paint. But too much of it is being developed, and the present landscape is disappearing. Everyone knows that. I think that's why landscapes have an even greater appeal today. I paint to retrieve the images of my childhood. I hope my paintings recall an age when technology was less pervasive and *Nature* wasn't just something you watched on PBS."

Bradley Shoemaker, who specializes in rural scenes around his central Pennsylvania home, agrees. "I love the depth and wide open scope of the landscape," he says. "I live in an area of old rolling hills and valleys, winding roads, and

old barns. I grew up here, and it's part of my past. But so much of the land is being developed. That's why I think landscapes are so appealing. They remind people of their relationship with the land. Everyone wants to have a space they can call their own. It gives people a sense of belonging."

Landscapes also give art buyers a sense of peace. It's another reason the subject matter has become increasingly popular. After all, most of us today week in towns and cities surrounded by hustle and bustle of urban life.

"It's such a busy world, and people really miss the nature," says Susan Swartz. "Yet nature is a part of us. That's why there is such a resurgence of buying landscapes, especially to hang in the office. People are glued to their computers, then they drive home and are glued to the TV. I think they want something in their lives that reminds them of something else. And landscapes often bring back fond memories of a special time in their lives."

Artists who paint landscapes genuinely love being



"Upper Reaches" by Peter Sculthorpe is filled with the rich tones of a timeless setting. Published by Bruce McGee Graphics. Enter 317 on reader service card.



A lone boat on a quiet pond in Susan Swartz's "Still Waters" reflects a serene, almost Oriental sense of peaceful solitude. Published by Susan Swartz Studios. Enter 318 on reader service card.



Elegantly poised amid stately reeds and bulrushes, a solitary egret seeks a moment of "Sanctuary" in the midst of mallow marshes. By Gerald Hjelm, published by Prints & Perspectives. Enter 319 on reader service card.

outdoors. And like Swartz, they often combine business and pleasure. "I love to go out walking and hiking," says Swartz. "I also do a lot of bicycling, so the camera is with me everywhere I go. We do a lot of traveling. We are out West in Utah in the winter and summer and spend spring and fall in the East. My husband has an office in San Francisco, so we are often up exploring the Napa Valley."

In some cases, artists are ardent outdoorsmen. Loren Blackburn, for example, is an ardent fisherman. "I've been drawn to landscape painting since

I was very young because I always spent a lot of time outdoors," he explains. "I love to be out on the lake. It's restful and rejuvenating. I like to fish—trout fishing is a passion! I love to paint areas like Lake George, especially summer scenes with lakes and surrounding mountains. You leave that dock and leave all your cares behind. It's a magical place to be."

Dale Gehrman, who passed away in June, did his most recent landscapes with flyfishermen and camping scenes. Like many of his fellow artists, Gehrman's landscapes were triggered

by his own childhood memories.

"My dad started me flyfishing when I was four years old. We used to hike up creeks and rivers and go to the mountains," he said in an interview not long before his death. "Now that I am disabled, I can't get out and do that stuff, so I recreate it on canvas. It gives me a feeling of being there. So much of it is lodged in my brain that I can just pull it out and paint it."

Jesse Barnes, best known for his dramatic lighting effects, is another artist into fishing and boating. "I love nature," he says. "It's a beautiful part of God's creation, and there is nothing more peaceful than being next to a stream, hearing the birds, and enjoying the sunshine. Maybe it's just the artist in me, but I love observing. I'm very aware of cloud formations, sunsets, flowers—anything that's growing."

Of course, you don't have to be an outdoorsman to love nature. Some artists just enjoy soaking up the surroundings. Shoemaker says, "I love driving in the country, and I have a good relationship with the landscapes I paint. But I'm not a camper," he laughs.

What these artists have in common is always traveling with a sketchpad or camera to record ideas. Although there is a long history of painting outdoors on site, that technique is often impractical.

There are a few exceptions, of course. Sculthorpe does some of his work outdoors. "But when I take the easels out, I also take two new umbrellas so I can spend the day without baking in the sun like I used to," he says.

But even he tends to finish the work in the studio. "It's no problem because I've already spent so much time on the subject and the mind doesn't forget too much."

Carl Hoffner admits he enjoys translating what he's seeing and does most of his landscape work outdoors. "It started when I was in college—I went out and painted *en plein air*—and I did that for about 15 years. But now I'm doing a lot of lithographs and that has to be done in the studio."



"A Golden Moment" shows a flyfisherman enjoying some private time on a western trout stream. By Dale Gehman. Available through Rainbow Creek. Enter 300 on reader service card.



"Tranquil Isle" by Loren Blackburn shows one of many beautiful islands that lie in the narrows of Lake George, New York. Published by The Adirondack Collection. Enter 301 on reader service card.

In the days before photography, artists tended to paint scenes almost exactly as nature made them. But today there are few scenes "pure" enough to paint as is. Painters have to take a little artistic license. As Blackburn says, "I'm a very realistic painter, and I take considerable time planning a piece. But when I come upon a scene with a gas pump or telephone pole, I remove it. I put things in but I also take things out."

That's what being a painter is about. Otherwise, a camera could do the job. Sculthorpe thinks the two techniques should keep their distance. "My watercolors are composed of my sketches and drawings. Photography is fine, but my respect is for photography that stands on its own as fine art—like good black and white photos. I don't think they should influence one another. They have a different language, and it's best to keep them apart."

Many landscape artists make extensive use of cameras—but only as a tool in creating the final product. As Blackburn says, "I gather most of my own reference material. I don't copy photos but I work from shots I take myself. I have a variety of lenses so I can gather the detail I need."

In most cases, Blackburn uses only black and white photos. "I don't like to take a lot of color because that influences the painting, and I don't want to end up copying a photo. I use the forms, but I add the color myself."

That idea is echoed by Shoemaker,

who also prefers to work from black and white shots. "Black and white gives you a better range of values than a color photo. That gives me a lot to work with. As the artist, I can put in the color. That color is mine!"

And only the artist knows the details he or she will need. Some painters use stock photos and even magazine clippings as a starting point.

Gehman said he often used photos taken by friends. "Now that I can't get around very well, I have to do my research vicariously. People know the problem so they go out and take photos for me—although a lot of what I paint is from memory anyway."

But that is an exception. Most artists insist they can't work from any photos but their own. Jon Crane, who claims he looks not for a scene but for a mood when he paints, says, "I can't paint from someone else's photos. I'm on location at every place I paint, and I have my own unique view of that. A lot of people don't realize what's involved in the creation of a landscape painting, so their photos don't take that into consideration. When I'm in a new area, I take many different views and use a telephoto lenses to get a lot of detail shots in those areas. But the photos just bring back of the vision I had when I was actually there."

Landscape artists work in a variety of media and styles, but their scenes are almost always composites, using some rolling hills here, a barn there, and a tree

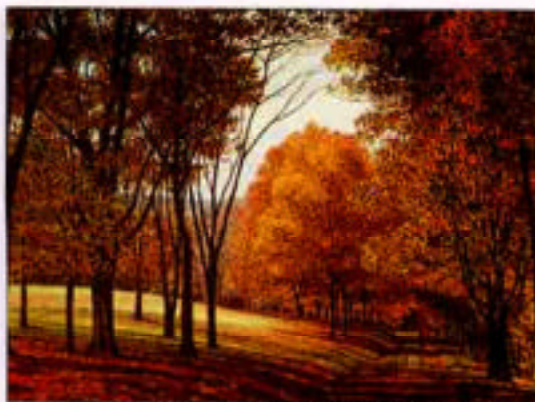


"Essence of Spring" shows one of the classic midwestern landscapes that self-published artist Jesse Barnes likes to paint. Enter 322 on reader service card.

from somewhere else.

Midwestern landscapes play a major part in Barnes' paintings, but he says he picks up details from other places. "I sketch and take photos, but I also have a photographic memory so I can remember something almost as well," he says. "I pick up ideas wherever I am, from other parts of the country and even overseas. I may stumble on a cloud formation or a sunset and paint them into my scenes. I try to make it realistic, but it's imaginary."

Landscapes come in many styles. First, of course, is the great variety of



The area around Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, is depicted in "Country Road" by self-published artist Carl Hoffner. Enter 323 on reader service card.



"Yosemite Valley" by Thomas Kinkadee reflects a lesser-seen side of the famed "Painter of Light." Published by Media Arts Lightpost. Enter 324 on reader service card.



Self-published artist Jon Crane offers a nostalgic, tranquil view back at America's roots in "Meadow of Memories." Enter 325 on reader service card.

scenery in nature. Some artists, such as Hoffner, enjoy manicured parks and botanical gardens while others like Pettegrew are drawn to the wild side. "I like to spend time in areas that are wide open," Pettegrew says. "I'm hooked on the state properties that are open to the public although they are not necessarily people-friendly areas. They can be deadly with snakes and alligators, but they are dramatic and unspoiled."

Changing seasons can also give new looks to any scene. As Swartz says, "There is something about the change of seasons that is wonderful."

Or, as Crane says, "Summer landscapes are a bit monotonous because there is just so much green. When the colors begin to change in autumn, a bit of magic takes place."

Shoemaker agrees: "I have painted summer scenes, but the greens are so overwhelming. Fortunately, we have four distinct seasons around here. Spring is beautiful because there are a lot of different colors, the buds are in

progress and the grasses are emerging. And of course the fall is spectacular."

In addition to working with color and shapes, most of these artists say that they also like to work with light. Swartz even claims her style changes with the light. "I like to paint what God created for me, especially the forms of sunlight and shadow. I like to capture the time of day. 'After the Rain' was simply that. It was a depressing, rainy day, and then the sun peeked through. That was a wonderful sense of respite—you don't appreciate the sun if it weren't for the rain."

Light also plays a large role in the work of Ron Williams who paints emotional landscapes which collectors often compare to the luminous works of the Hudson River School.

Bucolic scenes like "Hidden View" possess a mystical, otherworldly quality, thanks to Williams' ability to juxtapose light and shadow. Williams find his inspiration in the Southern Appalachian Highlands and has an uncanny ability to

capture the atmosphere softened by the summer haze.

Hoffner is also drawn to a similar atmosphere in the Blue Ridge Mountains. "I used to paint the manicured parks around the cities, but I'm beginning to explore the raw areas which in some ways are more interesting," he says.

"I drove to Atlanta recently, over the Blue Ridge Mountains, and I was really drawn to them. I did a lot of sketching and photography there and felt very comfortable. It was like going back to Eden."

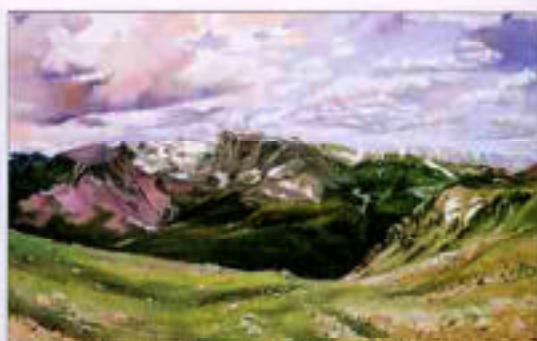
There is certainly something magic about that atmosphere, but it's hardly limited to mountains. Wonderful lighting effects are often due simply to the time of day. "Light is the key thing, and I love to play with it," Pettegrew says. "I do all my paintings during the dawn and dusk hours, except when I'm in the tropics. There you need that bright afternoon light."

He admits, though, that his choice of painting times can put a kink in his social life. "Recently my whole extended family rented a cabin in the mountains—a huge place with all the relatives hanging out. But every afternoon, just as they started to mix the cocktails, the light was so perfect I had to go out and paint."

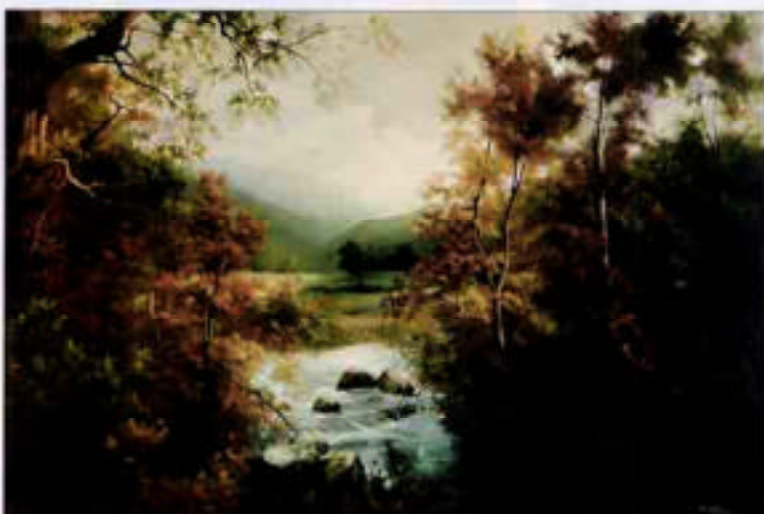
Light is also the defining factor in the work of Thomas Kinkadee, who



Two prominent church steeples rise beyond an incredible array of stream-side colors in "Riverfront, Lakewood" by self-published artist Bradley W. Shoemaker. Enter 326 on reader service card.



"Summer Snow" by Hoan Bui, published by Rocky Mountain Art, captures the rugged beauty of the Colorado High Country. Enter 327 on reader service card.



Ron Williams' vision of the Smoky Mountains softened by a summer haze in "Hidden View" is reminiscent of the Hudson River School. Published by Liz-Beth Fine Art. Enter 329 on reader service card.

refers to himself as "Painter of Light." Like the work of Williams, Kinkadee's paintings are often linked to the nineteenth-century Luminists for their emotional use of light. The California-based painter works on a large range of landscapes from rustic Western scenes to cozy cottages to bustling cityscapes, but all radiate with a glow in which he finds "soft edges, a warm palette, and an overall sense of light."

Barnes, who refers to himself as "The Light Painter," claims his interest in dramatic lighting effects dates back to his childhood. "I painted a moonlight scene on a lake when I was 10 years old, and I've been intrigued by lighting

effects ever since."

Barnes has always had a soft spot for dramatic landscapes. Nearly all feature dramatic lighting. "I got the name 20 years ago when I was painting on location at a theme park. Visitors would watch me paint and say, 'There is the Light Painter,' and the name stuck."

Painting with light is effective and dramatic, but it's also difficult to master, since light changes so rapidly. Outdoors, the light changes, shadows deepen, cloud formations move, and even the colors alter in the light.

"Don't forget the sun is constantly moving across the sky," says Sculthorpe, who is one of the few

artists who works outdoors. "So you have to make a decision about the light and direction of shadows. Sometimes you can only paint until noon and work on something else until dusk, then go back to the first when the light is the same."

That's why so many artists like to work from photos, which captures the light and shadow and holds it. Gehrman spent several years in Hawaii, doing tropical seascapes of sunsets over the water. "It's the toughest learning experience I've had, but it really improved my painting," he said.

"Capturing a moving object—like a wave—is the hardest thing. It's both coming in and going out, and it's a challenge to paint it realistically. But that experience improved my skills."

No matter the exact setting or style, a landscape is something everyone can relate to. It often brings the viewer a sense of peace and serenity. "I get a lot of comments from buyers on how my work has brought them a sense of tranquility, even for people who were very ill," says Barnes. "They feel a sense of peace coming through my work. That's why I like to do landscapes. It's such good therapy." ♦

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