

FOCUS ON ART

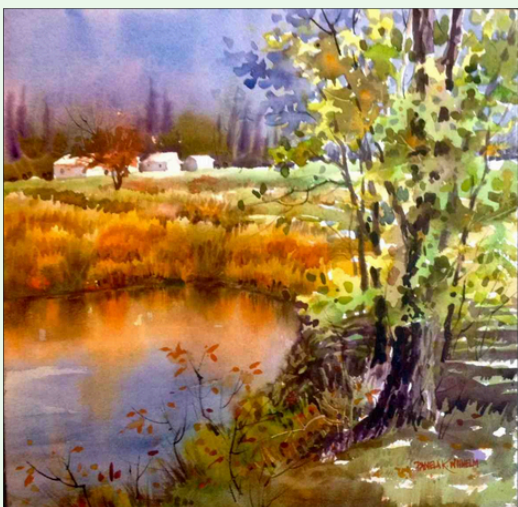


Q & A With Pamela Wilhelm

Watercolor & Mixed Media Artist

Editor: What first inspired you to study watercolor painting?

Wilhelm: My earliest influences were as a child. We didn't have a television until long after most families did so I spent my time drawing. I was in the hospital for a time and the nurses brought me paper and pencils. I was thrilled. I drew trees with hundreds of tiny branches. I gave the drawings to the nurses, and they were so thrilled. I felt confident for the first time. In middle school, we took a field trip to the Charles and Russell Museum and studio in Great Falls, Montana where I grew up. I was so captivated by the artwork and the studio that I just knew I was going to be an artist.



Editor: Do you mix watercolor with other mediums and if so, which?

Wilhelm: I have painted in watercolors, oils, & acrylics, my favorite medium has always been watercolors. But, now that I'm older, I am no longer a watercolor purist. I used to use only transparent watercolors and nothing else. Now I use watercolor and many other medias. I might use watercolors and gel pens, metallics, salt, graphite, dry pigments, colored pencils or pastels in my newer works.



Editor: What philosophy or approach do you use while conceptualizing a painting?

Wilhelm: Well, I used to rely a lot on photography. I would take hundreds of pictures. And I would also save pictures that I thought had potential in large notebooks now that I have a much looser style than before.

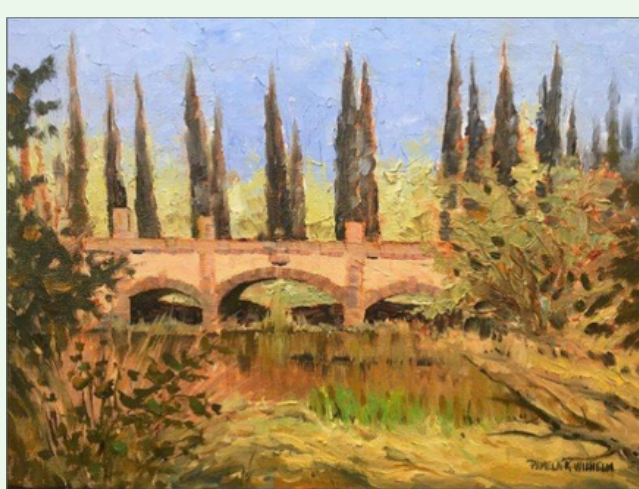
I would say about 80% of my paintings now are what I call spontaneous painting. I just pick out a piece of 100% cotton paper and I start adding wet passages and dropping color onto the wet areas and tilting the paper and adding more color and more wet areas and then I look it over and turn it from side to side and start to decide what it's going to be. Some of these do begin with some conscious thought, but none of them ever come out as a finished piece without a lot of both conscious and impulsive decisions.

I get so involved in my painting sometimes I forget to follow the rules. But some of the paintings on which I have not followed the rules end up being favorite paintings. One never knows.



Editor: Is there a certain mindset or environment you need to achieve to open up your creative process?

Wilhelm: My working environment is my studio. It is filled with all the things I need to create paintings. Create paintings, mat paintings, ship paintings, or store them. I think the unusual thing about the way I work is that I work whenever I feel like it. I am retired and I do not sleep well so most nights I'm up for a couple of hours in the middle of the night painting. I also try to paint during the day several times.



I do two different types of paintings. Pieces that I spend a lot of time on for possible exhibition and then small paintings for the eBay market. I've been selling my paintings on eBay since 2001. I used to be in a lot of galleries when I was younger, but I don't do that anymore. I like selling online. It's not for everyone. It's for people who are willing to sell their art at extremely competitive prices. I can do it because I'm very prolific. And I do it for my sense of well-being and control.



Editor: What do you find most difficult about mastering watercolor technique?

Wilhelm: Well, I feel as if I've been painting most of my life so I guess I would have to say at this point it's more a matter of going in the direction that I seek. I want to do work that is considerably looser leaning more toward the abstract. This is a challenge for me because I tend to get bogged down with some of the minutiae and of course you can always make a bad decision which is pretty typical. In those cases, I might have to change direction, but I've been around long enough that I can usually find a way to make it work in the end.



Editor: Many of your paintings are of nature or regional outdoor scenes. Please explain why.

Wilhelm: Most of my favorite paintings are landscapes. I just love the freedom and variety in the landscape because there are so many different things you can add and colors that you can use and they're very freeing. I'm also crazy about trees and love nature. Landscapes are also very popular with buyers. That has something to do with it as well.



Editor: Is there anything in particular you would like to share about yourself as an artist?

Wilhelm: My favorite years of painting and sharing my love of making art were spent as an artist in the schools for San Joaquin County. I am forever grateful for the opportunities that were given to me to be able to work and teach in schools. You cannot imagine the thrill of wheeling your cart full of art supplies down the hallway, opening the door to a classroom and rolling it in...The smiles and the excitement are immediate. Sometimes the children would spontaneously clap. They have been looking forward to this. They love making art, they love learning how to draw from kindergarten through high school students. I enjoyed my opportunity to be a mentor. There was no better job ever to have. Working with the teachers as well and making so many wonderful friends over the years. I wish to thank them all for inviting me into their classrooms. It was my greatest privilege.



Editor: Can you tell us a little about your family life?

Wilhelm: I have been in Tracy California since 1985. I am married to Robert Wilhelm (for 53 years) and I have two children, Robyn and Jordan who both graduated from Tracy high school. I have two grandchildren, Harrison, 12 and Callahan, 14.

More of Pamela Wilhelm's collection of work can be found and purchased at her [ebay store](#).

