

# EASEL SOCIETY

# NEWSLETTER

News from  
The Studio School  
June 2020

## **To Our Students, Supporters, and Art Lovers**

During this uncertain period, non-profits are working hard to remain financially viable, while our doors are closed. The Studio School has operated for thirty years and provided art instruction to thousands of students of all ages. Our faculty is comprised of professional, working artists who bring knowledge, skill, and enthusiasm to their students. We love our students and look forward to seeing them in one of the exciting classes we are eager to start, as soon as the coronavirus is behind us.

**Please consider making a donation to our school to help us weather this time. Any amount would be appreciated. We are a 501c3 non-profit.**

### **THE STUDIO SCHOOL REOPENING POLICY**

The Studio School is reopening in June, 2020 for classes offered in the summer schedule. In order to maintain a safe environment for our faculty and students we will do the following:

- Keep tables six feet apart
- Only 8 foot tables are in place
- Maximum of 10 students in front room
- 8 students in back room
- Cleaning of tables, doorknobs, faucets, etc. before classes start
- Table mats will not be used; bring a white trash bag or plastic to cover your space. Take it home to throw away.
- Wear masks and gloves
- There is a clorox solution in spray bottles to use on tables. Instructors will wipe down tables and chairs after each class.
- General classroom cleaning of surfaces will take place on a regular basis.
- Extra bleach and paper towels are in the cabinet in the front room.



### **Joan Fullerton**

**The Joan Fullerton Workshop has been postponed and we are in the process of rescheduling. Thank you for your patience as we navigate through this uncertain time.**

## An Artist's View of Morocco - Vera Dickerson

In early September several friends and I booked a small group tour with Collette named "Colors of Morocco". That's a seductive title for those of us whose lives revolve around learning how to use the emotional properties of color relations.

Before the tour I read travel blogs and talked with people who had traveled there, learning that this country is an open constitutional monarchy, that the cities are fairly free of dress restrictions, and travel there is as safe as in our country. Moroccan food was said to be extremely good and travelers always told me the people are warm and friendly. Just before we left, Covid19 appeared in China, S Korea and Europe, but there was none in Morocco.

We arrived in Casablanca on March 6 and walked into a modern metropolis on the Atlantic with ancient quarters. Traffic and drivers were absolutely wild, stopping inches from the next vehicle, playing chicken at every intersection, daring people to cross the street at stop lights. The next day it was a relief to be on a bus and leave the city behind for quiet farm and orchard country going east to Rabat and Fez.

Hassan II Mosque, and fields near Rabat.

Peach trees were in bloom, vineyards turning green, olive orchards, alfalfa fields, open lands where sheep herds were guarded by two shepherds with each flock. Some had an ancient air while others rode ubiquitous motor bikes.

In Fez, we followed our guide into the medina's narrow streets to Riad Sheharazade for a two night stay. The riad had been a home at one time and followed the traditional design of an open air atrium with fountain and pool, palm trees and flowers, and most all surfaces covered with tiles, carved wood or decorative plaster panels.

Our guide, Tahmi, age 70, had been working as a guide for 20 years, after a career operating a body building gym. This illustrates that strange mix of modern and old. He seemed to know every vendor in the miles of medina and carried a bag of wrapped candies which he tossed to children and merchants alike. They all told us he is a good man, and kids followed him hoping for a treat. Stalls are arranged by type of goods being sold: clothing, foods, sea foods, household goods, jewelry, hardware....on and on. The alleyways twist, angle off, turn and are truly a maze. It was a treat to compare that with a visit to a craft co-op where young people are being trained to throw and decorate pottery. Of course we were then steered to a shop, but at least knew this was authentic and beautifully done.

On the fifth day out we departed Fez and turned south through ever more arid land toward the Sahara.

After crossing the Atlas mountains, the road descended past a reservoir which serves much of the south, and the landscape became rocky, sandy vistas where only goats and their keepers wandered.

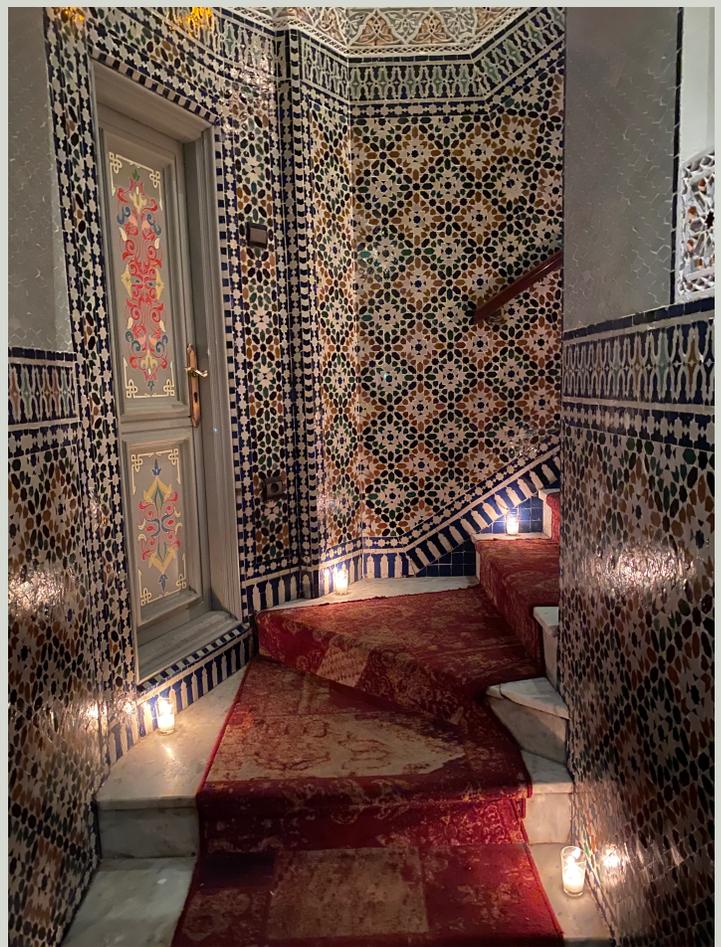


In the late afternoon our bus stopped at Merzouga and we climbed into a caravan of four white jeeps with drivers to take us across the sands on a 45 minute drive to our desert camp. The super moon rose, full and bright as the sun set in an amazing display in the clear, dry sky. We passed at least a dozen camps along the way, reaching our “Luxury Bivouac” at dark, and beheld five African musicians dressed all in white, welcoming us into a camp paved with oriental rugs and candle light. Not quite real!

In the desert we visited a small irrigated farm where the owner proudly displayed his crops of spices, herbs and date palms, did the obligatory camel ride out into the dunes and had photos made. The rocking motion of the gait explains one reason they are called ships of the desert. The camel behind me proceeded to scratch its head on my back and leg for the hour we rode. That shirt got bagged and dumped in the washer when I got home.

On the road again toward Marrakesh, a lunch stop also included a visit to a Berber museum which I found extremely interesting. Old wooded implements, written deeds, photos, clothing, pottery and maps helped to give me a better base of understanding. Moroccans come from many different backgrounds and are a mix of tribes and beliefs.

In Marrakesh, modern high rises took over, with wide boulevards, traffic and less restrictions in dress again the norm. Tours there were to the medina, Jardin Majorelle, and a center for abused women where we had a cooking lesson and ate our project for lunch. Blossom is lush and colors overwhelming. It will take a time to digest and translate what I experienced.



Food was delicious with a base of many cooked vegetables, beef, chicken or lamb. One could get “tagined out”, but the tagine of steamed vegetables arranged over a meat, is a staple of their diet and well cooked. Cities offered a menu of pizza, French foods, tacos (yes, tacos), Asian foods and Starbucks.

And it would be remiss not to talk about Covid19 which spread while we were in Morocco. Our Collette guide Yassine was on his phone a good part of the last day of the tour rescheduling flights for those in our group who had planned to fly home through Europe. He managed to get all rebooked, a feat I did not envy. And we were extremely thankful to have made the decision to fly Air Canada through Montreal, a smooth return in a strange and rather surreal journey on March 15.



## Thoughts on Creativity in the Face of COVID 19

### Ideas to Fuel Creativity For Everyone (C) by gina

#### 1. Definition Of Creativity

What is creativity, exactly? The use of imagination or original ideas to create something.  
AND

The ability to transcend traditional ideas, rules, patterns, relationships, or the like, and to create meaningful new ideas, forms, methods, interpretations, etc.

So at its most basic, creativity is simply the act of creating something that didn't exist before.

Where and how and with what materials you apply creativity is up to you.

It could be anything. There are no limits to the areas where creativity can be used.

#### 2. Follow Your Natural Talents

You can obviously apply your creativity in whatever area or areas you choose, but you'll get the biggest joy if you follow your natural instincts and talents. Having talent in a particular area simply means that it's easier for you to learn the necessary skills than it is for someone whose talents lie in a different area. Start where you feel comfortable!

#### 3. Go With the Grit!

Natural talent will give you a boost, but talent alone won't cut it. Creative endeavors often come with challenges.

You might be intimidated by needing to learn new skills. You might struggle with perfectionism and fear of failure. You might be battling the real-world demands of work and family when trying to find time to pursue your craft. You might get frustrated when your painting doesn't materialize exactly the way you imagined. You might be terrified of releasing your creation out into the world and making yourself vulnerable to rejection.

To overcome these kinds of challenges, you need grit. Grit is a combination of passion and perseverance that enables you to persist in the face of obstacles.

Simply put, you need to love what you do and be too stubborn to quit. This is a big part of being successful. Never give up!

For more on this topic, check out Angela Duckworth's wonderful book

Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance .

(This also is reflected in # 5 )

#### 4. Try, Try, Try, and Try Again

One way in which grit will help you is by pushing you to enhance your skills in your area of interest.

Regardless of how much innate talent you may or may not have, getting over the beginner anxiety and acquiring new skills and techniques is key. The more skilled you are, the more freedom you have to explore.

Think about someone who has writing talent but never learned the basics of spelling and grammar. Or someone who has artistic talent but never learned how to mix colors.

Everyone has to start somewhere.

Let yourself be a beginner.

Learn from others who went before you. And never let the learning stop.

#### 5. Carry On Through Fear and Failure

Grit will also push you to overcome fear of failure. Fear of failure is a giant obstacle to creativity. It can completely paralyze you and prevent you from creating altogether.

Fear of failure is perpetuated by the fact that we usually only see other people's successes.

We usually only see their final product. We don't see all the years they spent honing their skills. We don't see all the rough sketches and first tries and abandoned starts that happened along the way.

And we usually only see the successful creations. We don't see the failures. All the painted over canvasses or gessoed over sketch book pages. Even if it's mostly invisible, failure happens to all of us.

Even if it's mostly invisible, failure happens to all of us. In order to have a chance of success, you must be willing to risk failure and find ways to work through it.

I always tell my students, "Artist are problem Solvers." Once you embrace failure, there are no limits to what you will dare to try. At that point, what do you really have to lose? Some of my best works have been created from failures. When a problem arises, it forces you to find a solution and ask questions. This is when artistic growth occurs.

My favorite book on this subject is *Art And Fear* by David Bayles and Ted Orland. (A must read, actually.)

### **6. Begin Again, and Again, If Needed**

Sometimes you might get an inkling that you are pouring your heart and soul into a project that is headed Nowhere and Fast. But it can be really hard to admit this fact to yourself when you've put countless precious hours into your work of a lifetime.

However, there are times when moving on and letting yourself start over truly is the best thing to do. The more you accept failure as an expected part of the process, the easier it becomes to admit that you have landed on a no-go and the easier it becomes to start fresh.

### **7. Try Many Things**

And while we are on the topic of starting over, let me point out that creativity is not monogamy. You don't need to find the ONE. You don't need to settle on any one given idea or solution or project and stay painfully focused.

As a matter of fact, one of the best ways to boost creativity is to challenge yourself to come up with MANY possible ideas and ways to fix the problems. Challenge yourself to come up with a range of new ways of working. If you typically use a lot of blue, hide it! Challenge yourself to try new color schemes. If you don't draw, do daily contour drawings in a sketchbook, etc. For instance, create the same image in watercolor, collage, and a drawing.

### **8. Expose Yourself To New Work In Your Medium or Subject Matter, Or Not**

To keep trying out new possibilities, your brain needs stimulation. One way to incite creativity is to expose yourself to ideas and work by other artists. I often have my students choose a famous artist's painting and copy it. This doesn't mean that you'll become a copycat. Instead, you can collect ideas from multiple sources and then put them together in a way that's unique to you. Look at how they handled their subject, what mediums, and also take time to look at the Elements and Principles of Art to see how they handled them.

Other artists work can serve as a spark that ignites you to think of a new way in handling your own creative vision.

### **9. Expose Yourself To New Environments**

There's also something about exposing yourself to a new environment that entices your brain to make new connections.

I've noticed that whenever I go on a trip (short or long), I come back with a plethora of visual images, and photographs to work from. It's pretty much a given that as I make my daily trip to work (about 45 minutes) I will leave early and go down the back roads. I often photograph the early morning landscape with my iPhone.

### **10. Surround Yourself With Other Creative People (@6feet....with a mask)**

And then there are the people who inhabit your environment. You know that cliché about being the average of the five people you spend the most time with?

Enough said. Embrace new discussions, meet new people, join new groups, take a class out of your comfort zone, and try new resources.

## 12. Keep Idea Lists

Whenever ideas do come to you, be prepared to capture them.

Ideas have a tendency to show up at random moments when you are busy doing something completely unrelated. You might think you'll remember them later, but you won't. STOP and write them down.

Sometimes I even record longer versions of ideas on my cell phone.

I keep lists of random shared websites, artist names, and ideas on my notes section of my iPhone.

Sometimes I look at the list and I don't even remember seeing some of the ideas before. But there they are ready and waiting whenever I need them.

A small notebook on your desk, in your car, or by your bedside is another good way to go. I employ all of these! 😊

## 13. Step Away

Regardless of where and how you apply creativity, there will be times when you get stuck. When you don't know what to do next.

Sometimes all you need is to create distance between yourself and your work and you will be able to look at it a moment later with fresh eyes from a different perspective.

When I find myself asking questions about What? Where? How?

One rule my dad taught me always sticks in my head. He said, **"If in doubt, DON'T!"**

## 14. Movement

There are times when I literally just need to step away from my studio or easel for 5 minutes. But when that doesn't work, the answer will most often come to me the next morning when I'm gardening, on the elliptical, or when I take a morning walk.

Human beings evolved to be on the move and exercise literally makes our brains work better.

**15. Take Long Showers (or Swim)** If the answer doesn't come to me when I distance myself, it will come in the shower when I'm all relaxed and away from distractions.

## 16. Listen To Music

Try listening to music, all kinds of music. Typically, I try something out of my itunes collection.

Sometimes, for me, I get inspiration from a lyric. Just one line from a song can spur a whole series! The songs can also trigger past memories of people, places, and moments, which could easily increase your visual appetite.

## 17. Let Your Mind Wander

(I call this monkey mind.)

Sometimes ideas come to me when I'm letting my mind wander while doing something mindless, like vacuuming, dusting, or cleaning windows.

## 18. Look At A Different Point Of View

If just stopping when in doubt, you can look for a different perspective by pretending to be someone else. What would the person you admire the most do? What would one of your fellow artists do? How did a famous artist handle the problem? Have you ever seen works similar to your idea?

## 19. Ask For A Critique

Just ask someone. A friend, an art teacher, another artist, etc. Sometimes another person's fresh perspective is all you need to get inspired again. Sometimes I ask an unknown observer for a different approach.

## 20. When Is Your Most Creative Time Of Day?

One other way to boost your creativity is to time your creative pursuits so that they match your chronotype. Are you a morning-person or a night-owl?

I'm a morning person all the way and I noticed my creativity soared when I managed to change my schedule so that I was creating in the mornings as opposed to afternoons or evenings.

So if you can, it really pays to take advantage of the time of day when you are at your most productive and have the least distractions.

# KUDOS

Both Jane and Gina were included in the National Fine Arts Juried Show at the Academy of Fine Arts in Lynchburg.



Jane Frank Ghost Images  
Watermedia 36" x 28"



Gina Louthian-Stanley  
Marsh Mist  
Encaustic 12" x 12"

## 21. Just Do It!

With that being said, optimizing the conditions conducive to creativity is a luxury not a necessity. If you wait for inspiration and the perfect time, you might be waiting forever. The best way to start is to begin right where you are and then keep going!

**Simply START creating.**  
**Stay Well, Stay Safe.**  
**WE hope to see you soon!**



## Painting-Independent Study

For many years this class has met on Thursday mornings. Many of the core group of students have been with me for years. As with most people, I am missing the usual rhythms of my life. I miss my students every week. This pandemic has upended us all. Someday, I hope to resume my Thursday mornings with my talented students.

Here is the structure of our class:

We gather together and I demonstrate how to use certain art materials or techniques. I present books, art magazines, art history, or a profile of an artist's work to share with students. Occasionally, we will watch part of a DVD showcasing a particular artist who demonstrates their process.

Afterwards everyone works on their own painting. Each student paints whatever they wish. Some work from nature, others work very abstractly. Many students add collage and mixed media elements to their work. During the winter session, we ordered Doak's spray watercolors and experimented with them.

During class, students show me their work in progress and I give them suggestions to help finish the piece.

It is hugely rewarding to see them following the process, implementing my suggestions, and creating a successful image. I have taught art classes at the Studio School for 28 plus years. It is strange for our school to be shuttered, but our students can keep painting, drawing, and doing whatever form of creative expression they chose. I am working in my studio most days.

Our creative selves must be fed, just like our physical selves. I look forward to the resumption of the interaction with my Thursday morning students. They are the best.

Jane Winders Frank

# Easel Society

As an easel supports a painting, the members of The Easel Society support The Studio School. Membership is offered to students, their families and community members.



As a non-profit, The Studio School aspires to bring art exposure to our community wherever/whenever we can. Like most non-profits, we operate on a shoestring budget, so we are MOST appreciative of your financial support—it helps us keep class fees down, supports local art programs, and enables us to offer workshops by leading national known instructors.

Easel Society members receive advance notice of trips, art events, and shows, discounted rates on selected programs, reduced rate on 'Art Blast' with advance notice, and more.

Your gift is tax-deductible. The Studio School is a non-profit organization with 501.c.3 tax-exempt status. Contributors will receive end of the year summaries for their records.

- Corporate Memberships are available.
- The Easel Society also oversees a program of Annual and One-time Gifts.
- Those who help underwrite special events are recognized in publicity about that event.

Annual Easel Society dues are due by December 1st for the following year.

Dues levels are:

- Basic \$35
- Sketchbook \$36 to \$99
- Portfolio Circle \$100 to \$249
- Juror's Choice Circle \$250 to \$499
- Best in Show Circle \$500 to \$999
- National Treasure Circle \$1000 +

Payment is by check only, mailed to:  
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