

A SEASON OF WORKSHOPS

A GUIDE TO PREPARATION, EXPECTATIONS & ATTENDANCE OF
WORKSHOPS FOR PAINTING FROM LIFE – HEAD, FIGURATIVE & STILL.

An in depth guide to artist who are considering/or attending a workshop for the first time. Plus a comparison of three different types of experiences, from teachers, locations, facilities and accommodations for those who have had limited workshop experience.

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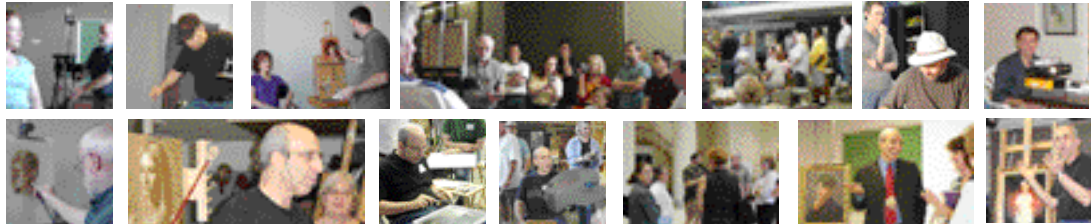


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I INTRODUCTION

After working in the graphic arts industry as an art director, I decided to forego the red sports car and enter my mid-life crisis by returning to my fine art roots. Even though I was the proud owner of five Macintosh computers and an overly developed mouse claw for a right hand (from years of drawing on the computer), I pulled out a set of pastels one day and haven't turned back. It is my goal to become a portrait artist, but I didn't want pastel to be my only medium. In the 70's when I received my BFA we used acrylics for studio. I really can't recall using oils successfully, which led to my spring of workshop mania where in the span of 3 months I studied with three different teachers, in three different locations under three different sets of circumstances.

Having never attended a workshop before, I thought I could pass on some great information – factual, practical, philosophical and "arty".

II DECIDE THE STYLE AND MEDIUM YOU WANT TO WORK WITH

Some teachers will let you choose the medium you would like to work with, but most will require you use the one that they teach using. So find an artist whose style and medium best match yours. I picked three different artists with varying approaches to teaching classic realism; but I found the enrichment far out-weighed the differences.

It's important to remain objective and open to the instructors way of teaching. If you enter into your class with your mind fully set to a rigid painting procedure – you will spend your time rebelling against your instructor. You are the one paying to learn his or her way of painting, so relax and be ready to absorb.

III RESEARCH ARTIST WHO TEACH

There are many ways today to find artists who can fulfill your needs. Various art/trade publications list classes offered by professional artists, many of the artists featured in magazines teach. These publications may also contain a classified section advertising classes.

The internet has opened up the art world. You can search for the style, medium and even classes on the internet. When you see an artist's work that you admire, do a search for them, if they offer classes they may be listed on their site, if not listed, e-mail them and ask about classes.

The old school of traditional galleries can be a wealth of information as are leading art schools, for both undergrad and adult. Also, don't forget to ask your friends or other artists you know.

I found my instructors through a web site I visit for portrait artist since that was to be my area of concentration.

IV ASCERTAIN THE LEVEL OF YOUR SKILLS

Take an honest look at your skill level, I know, this isn't easy for anyone. Where are you now and what are your future goals as an artist? As hard as it is, this is important to do. Some classes will list the student level on the schedule, ie; intermediate or advanced oils, juried class, beginner, all levels. If you as a beginner try and attend a

higher level class you might feel overly intimidated. But no matter what level you are at, it has been my experience that the teachers and students will make you feel welcome and are willing to share their knowledge. Just make sure that the class you pick will challenge but not deflate, your enthusiasm.

V REVIEW THE REASONS FOR YOUR ATTENDANCE

Are you going on vacation, getting away from the kids? Do you want some 24/7 quality art time with others who feel the same and an instructor to help smooth the bumps? Is this your career and you need to fine tune your skills or learn new ones? The answer to these questions will help you determine the answer to the following ones...

VI LOCATION AND COST

Simply put, workshops can become very expensive or they can be approached with a budget in mind. After you have decided on your teacher, see what locations they will be teaching and decide if you want to travel or stay close to home.

You will have basic cost that are involved in all workshops:

- A. **Tuition** – these are usually based on who is offering the workshop; the artist, school, art supply company, community group. The area where your class is held will be a factor too; up state Ohio is not going to demand the prices of Scottsdale, AZ.
- B. **Location** – This can enter into the vacation/learning get-away more than other considerations. Is the workshop in an area you have looked forward to visiting? Is the area rich in the art style you like.

Travel - this will depend on your decision for location, I tried this three ways. The first workshop I flew. This can add to shipping cost below.

The second workshop was an hour from my home in Rising Sun, Indiana, so I met a friend, Gina, in KY each morning (but one) and we drove. I strongly advise against commuting and staying at home. It is an important part of the experience to be with the other artist for conversation. The learning continues after class time. Not to mention the fact, the day I drove myself I received a speeding ticket that would have covered the cost of a motel for at least two nights.

Lastly I went to Greensboro, NC. , I took two days and drove. The one nice thing about a workshop within this travel distance (6 to 8 hours) was the fact I could pack my auto as needed. Plus, I had totally forgot just how breathtaking S.W. Virginia appears as you round the corner to Interstate 81.

Room and board – again this will be determined by location and again I tried this three ways. The first workshop I stayed at an extended suite type motel. It was a small room with a full kitchen and bath, but it was also within walking distance of the school. A lot of the other students stayed here also which was nice. You could have your breakfast in your room, and I would always pack something so I wouldn't have to leave the studio for lunch.

For the Indiana workshop I stayed home, but tried to convince my family I was invisible. I am not sure how anyone can absorb so much then go home to make dinner. One evening Gina I did stay over. It was an "Inn" on the river. I had memories of Myrtle Beach in the 70's, but I would have chose this over the speeding ticket any day.

In NC, since we were at Greensboro College we could stay for a fair (compared to the motel) rate at one of the Dorm's. 5 of us chose to do this and will forever be known as the "dorm ladies". I thought I had done a really good job thinking back to remember a robe and slippers, plus one of those little coil heaters for water to make coffee - but I totally forgot that you needed to bring your own lamps. We did rent linens from the college, and my trusty flashlight/lantern combo came in nice in the evening. Fortunately the rooms had their own sinks with a light above these.

Always plan on packing or purchasing snacks and beverages, you will never know what you will find where you lodge. If you are not a scheduled meal eater, or an artist like myself who doesn't like to stop for lunch, meal bars or shakes work great.

- C. **Supplies** – required art supplies can go from a limited list to an extreme list, don't forget to figure in these cost too, they can add-up into the hundreds of dollars.
- D. **Shipping cost** – this will be based on your location. Be sure to check for restrictions regarding some materials.
- E. **Misc.** – Tipping of models, celebrations with classmates, museum visits etc.

Check with online companies such as orbitz.com for good deals on flights and rental cars. If your class is in association with a school, make sure you ask for available student discounts for lodging too. Don't be shy about having them set you up with a room mate if necessary.

The decisions are made, deposits are paid now it's time to get ready...

VII PRACTICE

- A. Are you a member of your local art club or association? Do you attend their open studio and practice your life drawing? Are you using the medium that you will be working with?
- B. Are you drawing everyday even if it's the dirty dishes on the table?

VIII PRE-INTRODUCTIONS

- A. One of the great things you can do as a student to lessen your anxiety is to familiarize yourself with the teacher and some of the artist that will be attending with you. Your teacher will be happy to connect you with others in the class via the internet or phone. Just a month before a workshop I would end up with a number of pen pals. It made walking into the studio so much easier since I felt like I was putting faces on people I had known for a while.
- B. This is also a great way to get to know your instructor and get an idea of their plans for the workshop. Will you work from natural light only? Ask them about the right glasses. Will you stand or sit? Will the teacher demonstrate most of the time or work with students individually? My first workshop, I felt like I had made a new best friend in William Whitaker because I corresponded with him just about daily. Little did I know that ALL of the students in the world were doing the same thing! If you do not get immediate replies, don't get upset - you have no idea if they are being bombarded daily.

IX PRACTICE

- A. Have you been reading up on the style you have chosen and familiarized yourself with the well known names of that style both living and past? Doing your homework will help you feel like a more intelligent artist in addition to a more informed one. Read about others approaches so you can ask questions about why that may work for them but not your instructor.
- B. You should be drawing everyday. Take a great reproduction and work in pencil doing a 2 dimensional drawing, keep it up until it looks like a Xeroxed copy.

X PREPARE FOR THOSE AT HOME

- A. As you would for any time you go away, make sure all arrangements are taken care of at home. You don't want to worry about the "everyday" stuff while listening to the wonders of the old Masters.
- B. Take care of your professional business too. I was amazed at the number of people interrupting their own learning time to take pages and cell calls. It is understandable that people need to take care of business, but if you are serious enough to take time away to study make arrangements for an answering service for the week. Be fair to yourself and those around you.

XI PURCHASING YOUR MATERIALS

- A. Did your instructor send you a list of supplies, this will usually have a list of places where to find them too? Make a checklist and make sure you have all supplies listed. If you have trouble finding a material or have something you think you can substitute ask your instructor first. Their list are detailed for a reason. Some list can be overwhelming, but you will be amazed at how things are used. Don't forget a notebook or something to write in.

In AZ, we were required to have an arm held palette, preferably balanced. The instructor went to great lengths to describe these because of their comfort. Before the class I thought he was just really thorough, then you're in the studio you realize you're going to be standing for 6 hours. Holding a balanced palette can get tedious for the greatest of athletes learning the painters dance - but add the logistical problem of your taboret being 10' from your easel and you will understand even better his logic.

In a NC workshop the wonderful organizers spent their time trying to get what others forgot. Again, a little consideration goes a long way here, nothing should be a surprise. Don't impose on others.

- B. After your checklist is completed from your instructor, do a cross check with the information you will receive from your "location". Schools, studios and other facilities will rarely want anything but odorless turps to be used. You need to make sure they have the basic things - like an easel or taboret? If you don't see these mentioned -ask. I arrived for one workshop and painted on top of a chair thinking all facilities had easels. Better yet, keep a "French Easel" in your back pocket.

XII SENDING THINGS TO YOUR LOCATION

- A. After your supplies are purchased and you know how you are traveling, check with that respective provider to see if you will need to ship things ahead of time. Most schools will receive your supplies at least one week in advance. Larger workshop areas will usually have art stores within walking distance. Remember to ask if they have a discount for art students!

- B. If your workshop is away from home and last for more than one day, you will need to plan on more than your paints. You will be amazed as you check your supplies how easy it is to forget about the personal items. Although titanium white will brighten your smile, I'm not sure your dentist will appreciate it's oral hygiene properties.

In addition to your normal travel necessities you will want to consider where you will be painting and plan accordingly. Call ahead to see if the studios tend to be warm or cold. If you'll be outside, sunscreen and bug spray are two musts.

If you are an artist like myself and feel that your greatest source of self expression is the paint you proudly wear home or track all over the floor - keep in mind class hours are not the time for a fashion statement. Forego the stylish shoes and get a great pair of walking shoes or sandals but remember to put an extra pair of socks in your bag in case the studio gets cold.

I have found it is not only fun, but could be hugely profitable to bring a pair of "painters pants" or a plain canvas apron, a rub-a-dub laundry pen and have all the future masters sign your clothing with their painting signature. Look out ebay, I have some awesome autographs!

A lot of instructors will be dressed in what you will think is the same outfit daily, but actually they are making a conscientious effort to stay the same, usually in dark clothing so when they approach your easel their will not be reflective colors on your canvas.

Exhausting as the days are, there will be a couple of evenings when you will go out as at least a small group. Some of the more "artsy" areas will have traditional "gallery walks". You will want to plan items to cover these important events too. Prepare for at least two non-Jackson Pollock outfits. Don't forget, this time is for you, so have fun. Sometimes we don't get breaks like this to talk with others who want nothing more than to talk just art.

Don't forget your camera. Ask your teacher and/or models if you can take photos. You will definitely want pictures of the new friends you make.

XIII PRACTICE

- A. Visit galleries and museums in your area or wherever you travel. It is a great way to learn. If you are still drawing everyday ask your instructor if you can send some of your drawings to them via internet jpgs for critique.
- B. Before AZ, I would draw a "David-a-day" from a cast head. Practice is so important.

Now that it seems enough time has passed for Leonardo da Vinci to finish "The Last Supper" the workshop is finally here!

XIV WORKSHOP

A. Studio

If your teacher is the caliber of mine they have painstakingly positioned each easel to maximize viewing of the models and keep glare off your work surface. The floor will be taped off so you can put things back together should they be moved, if they don't do this - make sure you do, always travel with a good roll of colored tape. In some schools your room might be used in the evening and you will need to pack up each day. Check on the locker situation, it's a pain to pack up all the time, you'll want to make it as convenient as possible. When you inquire about things like lockers, always ask the size! Some lockers are so thin they hold canvas, but not tackle boxes so things might not fit.

Most schools will open to students 1/2 hour before the actual workshop time. This is extra time not only needed but must be utilized well. You won't want to waste precious model or art time preparing your palette and/or mixing your mediums. Mattelson's skin tone palette takes at least 2 hours for the beginner to mix alone. During this time the first day, a lot of locations will have complimentary bagels and coffee, the rest of the time your on your own.

Each workshop I attended this spring had a different set-up for models. Whitaker had two models that rotated model stands after lunch. Bill had us pick at random cards with two easel positions, one for the morning and one for the afternoon, making sure at least one was a good view. This gave you the opportunity to work with both models. Since Tim Tyler had us work from still-life setups, he had only one model and we rotated with partners from day to day. Marvin had three models so all easels would have good positions and you worked from the same person at all times.

B. Etiquette

1. Here are just a list of things to consider that may really bother the other artist in a tight studio situation during their painting time:

- Talking
- Singing (humming)
- Questions
- Moving furniture
- Walking behind easels
- Entering or leaving the studio during non-break times
- Chewing gum, eating or drinking
- Cell phones
- Constantly borrowing supplies
- Leaving the lids off of brush cleaning jars, or other mediums even though they are odorless
- Different music types
- Critiques and/or offering unsolicited advice, even if offered with good intentions

Some of the above may seem silly to you, so I found it best just to turn to those by me and simply ask them, people will be honest.

2. Working with models:

- Do not talk to the models while they are posing
- Be sure to designate only one person in your group for checking positioning
This person should have one of the easier views and should always check with the group before they move the model or ask if the position is okay with all
- Never touch the models without their consent, this includes positioning a sleeve or collar
- Never photograph a model without their permission
- Obey the models break times. The only time a models shouldn't stop when the timer goes off is if the instructor is working at a canvas - true model pro's know this
- Be sure to slip the models a nice tip at the end of the week, especially if they have let you photograph them

C. Curriculum & Schedule

Hopefully the instructor has told you the format of the workshop well in advance. It is hard to go in that first day all anxious to paint and realize most of it is likely to be lecture and demo. Remind yourself you are there to get every little fact from your teacher or as Bill will say "learn from all the mistakes that he has made so you don't have to make them too". When they show how to stretch a canvas, watch and take notes - I bet you are doing something you could improve upon.

So if you had the chance to watch Rembrandt paint, would you be stuck looking over his shoulder - or go to your own easel and paint? All artists will have different teaching curriculums, but since they are just like us, their number one love will be to demonstrate painting. This is where you can really see the nuances of their style, this is where you get a chance to see it come together - don't miss a demo! I have been told there are artists who teach by demo 24/7, but don't take the time to give individual help. Someone also mentioned to me that one artist gives a total of 5 minutes per individual. Fortunately this was not my experience with any of my workshops. All of my teachers did do demonstrations but made sure there was ample time for personal attention.

Being informed about demo time will help your psyche prepare for it. When you see your teacher doing all these great things, it wouldn't be normal if you weren't anxious to paint too. If you know the demo will last the morning session, this will alleviate that anxiety.

Model breaks are a good time to prepare paints, play with backgrounds and go over class notes. But remember to move and stretch.

In the opening lecture hopefully your instructor will talk about how he/she wants to handle questions. The whole class will all benefit from others relevant questions. Remember "There are no bad questions", BUT there may be too many of them. If you continually ask if a stroke was added with a #2 or #4 filbert it is really not of importance, and will just take up time. Minor details will be addressed when the teacher thinks it's important.

Remember attending workshops are much more beneficial if you assert yourself. In two instances I noticed or was told of crying because students were feeling neglected. If you ask your instructor for help or to come to you next, and they are caught up in someone else's work, remember they may not really hear you - or another student might have side tracked them on the way to your easel. Don't take this personally, go ask them again. Your work is just as important as everyone there. If you find this to be a continuing problem, pull the instructor aside during a break and talk to them about your concerns.

D. Techniques

All instructors have different techniques, which is a major reason you choose who to study with. Not only will they tell you what paint they use but how to mix it, or what to mix it with. They will have a style for holding their brushes when they paint, give it a try. Hold a brush in your hand during a demonstration and mimic the movement. Watch how the brush becomes a baton in the hands of a master. For drawing some instructors use measuring tools, other use brush sizing and some just by looking and training the eye to go it alone. They will all teach value, form and edges.

Learning three different techniques from my workshops was a lesson in objectivity and putting the right pieces together, but it was a powerful experience. It is amazing the further I progress the more I see their techniques melting into one for me.

E. Specials

If you're lucky your workshop will include some special extras. Tim and Marvin both added museum tours to their workshops. I learned so much from these. Tim came one day early and traveled to the Cincinnati Art Museum to lead a tour through the new wing, it was open for all workshop members and their guest.

Marvin brought the Met to us, with his "Everything I know about painting, I learned at the Met" slide presentation.

There is nothing better to point out the greatness of classic realism than the Masters actual artwork. Both of these instructors have keen eyes and really change the way you look at art. Remember the old saying "A picture is worth a thousand words"? Well an actual painting is worth a million. Ask questions if you have them, don't leave these presentations without a true understanding of the material presented. These specials can give you insight into the "soul" of your instructor, especially the color of his palette. I really regret there wasn't time for a tour with Bill.

Some areas provide "gallery walks" which is a wonderful chance to get a look at what your contemporaries are doing.

While in Indiana, Tom Zeit the senior editor for "The Artist Magazine" paid us a visit and showed us some of the art work in up coming editions. It was especially great to listen to him talk about his trip to see Bert Silverman for a feature they will be doing, especially hearing all about his studio and work style. Tom also touched on the importance of using transparencies for shooting work, he feels the digital images do not reproduce as well.

XV WORKSHOP CONCLUSION

- A. As the workshop comes to a conclusion, it is good to remind yourself that you did not attend to paint something lovely to take home - but to learn the skills to paint something well in the future.

I left Bill's workshop with two canvass, one that I was so excited about and one I was hoping would get lost in shipping. I had literally scraped the canvas off everyday starting over, so, by the last day my one head study had grown to Saddam proportions, yikes, it was horrible but neither were finished.

I left Tim's with a head study that was really more of a sketch and two "in progress" still-lifes. Since I concentrated on only one figure during Marvin's class, I felt my canvas was a little more polished but certainly far from done.

Most instructors will give you their tips for traveling with wet canvas, there are so many ingenious ways people have invented. I used 4 tacs in the corners putting two canvass together painting side in, but I would not recommend this. It did damage the corners and actually bowed out one of the stretchers.

- B. Keep in touch with your new classmates. It is very easy to start your own Yahoo group on the internet. It is fun to share and watch everyone's progress, and I think the instructors enjoy staying in touch this way since it cuts down on their personal e-mail. Some people in your classes you might remain close to but others will eventually fade away - that is of course until you see them at the next workshop or possibly hanging in the museum!

My favorite quote I heard during these workshops was from Marvin. I don't think he is the originator, but it is perfect to pass on after a week of intense studies;

"You won't leave with the food, but the tools of the farmer"!

XVI BIOGRAPHIES

A. Background of Artist/Author

1. Elizabeth W. Schott

A native Cincinnati who received her BFA in Fine Arts and Education from Emory and Henry College in the arts rich community of Abingdon, Virginia. While attending E&H she participated her sophomore and senior years in the Roman Art and Archaeology January Study Program in Rome, Italy. Elizabeth also studied Appalachian crafts and pottery at Virginia Intermont. She attended the Art Academy of Cincinnati, Cincinnati Art Museum for sculpture, then completed her post graduate work in Advertising Design at the Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale.

She has been active in the field of graphic design for 24 years working in print and video production for such clients as – Procter & Gamble Co., The General Electric Co., Sears, Gibson Greetings, Libby's Gourmet Desserts, and many more fine companies.

She is a member of the Portrait Society of America, the Pastel Society of America and the Cincinnati Art Club, she is also represented by A Stroke of Genius, a web site for portrait artist.

Elizabeth is featured in the "Master Portrait Artist" section "International Artist Magazine", issue #40. She has had private exhibitions and has shown with the Cincinnati Art Club and Hyde Park Square Juried Art Festival.

B. Background of Artists/Instructors

1. William Whitaker

William was fortunate, starting at age 17, to receive a thorough grounding in academic figure drawing and painting from the portrait painter Alvin Gittins at the University of Utah, and after exploring other styles he followed his heart into traditional art.

Whitaker loves to paint from life in an old fashioned studio. No matter what direction his art takes him, he always comes back to the model in the studio, the form bathed in the beautiful quiet cool light coming down from a high north window. He refers to this kind of seeing and painting as the Old Testament of art and feels there is enough magic to engage him there for the rest of his life.

He believes the value of painting is to be found in its spiritual power. Having been told all his life that the kind of painting he enjoys is dead, he takes quiet comfort in lovingly attempting to capture something the camera cannot see. He is also delighted that there are so many wonderfully talented young artists who are not bound or inhibited by contemporary art world conventions and who are out to paint beautifully crafted pictures without apology.

He has been a professional artist since 1965, during which time he has conducted workshops and been a university art professor. He continues to work with one or two advanced student artists for fun. He paints about three or four hours every day and spends the rest of the time trying not to ruin any good work he's done.

2. Timothy C. Tyler

Continually growing as an artist, Tim is exploring and researching mythological subjects. Through these archetypes and symbols, he aspires to depict human themes and emotions. These works are carefully set up and painted direct from life - the same method he uses for his still life and portrait art. He is still inspired by the works of Sargent, Zorn, Leighton, Waterhouse, Bouguereau, and Gérôme.

During his twenties, Tim exhibited at Scottsdale Artists' School "Best & Brightest" show and was named by Art Talk as an "Artist Worth Watching" for his still life paintings. Museums, collectors, art publications & organizations have long held Tim as a fine American artist. Publications that have featured his work include Southwest Art, Art of the West, American Art Review, The Artists' Magazine, Fine Art Collector & Wildlife Art Magazine. The Artists' Magazine featured his painting, "Tangerines & Turquoise" on the cover of their July/August 2002 issue. His work hangs in the permanent collections of Bennington Center for the Arts in Vermont and the Chisholm Trail Museum in Oklahoma. Other museums that have exhibited his work include Tacoma Art Museum, C.M. Russell Museum, and the Gilcrease Museum. Tim has been a signature member of the Oil Painters of America since 1993. He has also been a member of American Society of Portrait Artists, the Portrait Society of America, and was recently invited to join the California Art Club - a rare occurrence for an out-of-state artist.. In 2001-2002, Tim was honored to have his work included in the Renaissance Show & Sale in Hilton Head, NC & the American Art Classic held in Houston, TX through Morris and Whiteside Galleries. Presently nine galleries from coast to coast represent his work.

3. Marvin Mattelson

Marvin is an oil portrait painter who draws on over thirty years of professional experience as an artist. Ten of Marvin's paintings are included in the permanent collection of the National Portrait Gallery at the Smithsonian Institution. His portraits hang in both private and corporate collections around the world. He has been commissioned to create portraits of the CEOs from Met Life, NYNEX, and ITT Corporation, the Board of Directors of MBNA, as well as composer Philip Glass and writer/historian Conner Cruise O'Brien.

After receiving his BFA from the Philadelphia College of Art, Marvin embarked on the long road to discover the knowledge that he felt was so evident in the work of the old masters. He is most indebted to portrait painter John Frederick Murray, a student of the late Frank Reilly, for his insights into the academic painting process.

Prior to becoming a full time portrait painter, Marvin was an award winning illustrator. He was commissioned to paint over twenty covers for Time Magazine. A partial list of clients includes Dream Works, MTV, Newsweek, FEDEX, Putnam, Warner Publishing, A&E, CBS, ABC, Geffen Films, National Geographic, Scientific American, The US Postal Service and Angel Records.

His cover for the CD "Chant" helped propel it to number three on the Pop Charts, making it the most popular classical album of all time. He has received over sixty awards from the Society of Illustrators Annual Exhibition. Marvin's work has been featured in articles in Communication Arts, Print Magazine, Idea Magazine, and Step by Step Graphics Magazine and has appeared in numerous illustration, advertising and design annuals. American Artist Magazine will be showcasing Marvin's portraiture in an upcoming feature article.

