PASTELAGRAM

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**BOB GERBRACHT
HALL OF FAME
HONOREE 2015**

pastel
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america

Young Man with Shaved Head by Bob Gerbracht

PASTELAGRAM

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SUMMER 2015

The photographic reference has become an integral studio tool in the modern pastel artist's creative kit. Many artists forego sketchbooks, relying upon the camera in lieu of drawing, especially when traveling.

Edgar Degas's 1865 portrait of Princess Pauline de Metternich was one of the first paintings that relied on a photograph used by the princess and her husband as a calling card. In this singular painting, Degas reveals all the clues an artist needs for successfully utilizing a photographic image as a reference for a painting. The photograph is a black and white print, while the painting is created in a color palette imagined by the artist. The photograph captures the husband and wife as a couple, while Degas crops out the husband painting the Princess as a single figure seated against an ambiguous backdrop of wallpaper or a garden of bare branches invented by the artist. Her face and hair are depicted in high contrast and the skirt is rendered in flat color, painterly indications of the photographic reference.

Celebrating Forty-Three Years of Excellence

In this issue of *Pastelagram*, seven accomplished PSA Signature artists reveal their methods of working with—but not copying—photographs as references. Duane Wakeham, using multiple photographs and 15-minute studies, reveals how he captures the fleeting essence of California's coastal landscape. Known for her en plein air paintings of complex urban scenes and interiors, Nancy King Mertz utilizes photographs to jog the memory of intricate details, while Richard McKinley demonstrates his control of the photograph as a useful tool and aid in the process of building a painting. Known for pushing the physical boundaries of pastel, Bill Creevy takes the reader on a plein air travel workshop via Google Earth using Street View to capture his subject. Jeanne Rosier Smith shares essential tips for working from photographs. Wende Caporale reveals her and master portrait painter Daniel Greene's methods of supplementing photographs with life sessions for creating a portrait that captures the subject's personality and fleeting emotion.

Celebrate the 43rd PSA Annual Exhibition and its artists by joining your PSA family from all over the country and abroad in the Grand Gallery of the National Arts Club for the energized three-day pastel weekend of activities. See the calendar of events on the facing page.

With the exception of the graphic designer, Virginia Hamill, and the printer, *Pastelagram* is produced by PSA volunteers and is supported by members' dues, donations, and advertising sponsors. Thank you Arlene Richman, PSA, my co-editor, for the generous contribution of your time and professional editorial skills in making this *Pastelagram* possible.

By supporting the Pastel Society of America, a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational entity, with your membership dues, donations, sponsorships, and bequests, you ensure the longevity and financial health of the oldest and largest professional pastel society in America serving more than 1,000 artist members all over the world..

Jimmy Wright
Jimmy Wright, PSA-MP, President

ISABELLE V. LIM, PSA

A native of Singapore currently making her home in Hong Kong with her husband Alex, Isabelle is a tireless ambassador of the art of pastel throughout Southeast Asia and China. In 2014, she was the volunteer coordinator in bringing 10 western pastel artists to exhibit with 10 China master pastelists at the First China (Suzhou) Biennial International Pastel Art Exhibition. She has been honored by the Société des Pastellistes de France and is a member of the IAPS Master Circle. In April 2015, Isabelle was appointed the exclusive international consultant to the China Pastel Network and Ming Gallery of Art, Suzhou, PR China.

When not working to further pastel painting in Asia, Isabelle's diverse painting subjects are based largely on Asian art, culture, and environment. She believes painting is all about colors—the language of Asian cultures. Asian folk subjects have inspired several painting series. Her tiny shoes are delicately rendered in the series Journey. The series Hong Kong Residents is all about gold fish in plastic bags, while Sunny Side Up looks closely at Asia's ubiquitous bicycles, and the Village Boys series depicts colorful and lively koi fish from her Hong Kong village home region.

Isabelle exhibits regularly in international juried and invitational shows. She has won numerous international awards and has been featured in several books and international publications.

Isabelle V. Lim, PSA, *Sunny Side Up #35,* Pastel, 14" x 20"

MR. AND MRS. ROBERT Z. NORMAN

Barbara Makanowitzky, PSA, *Whirlpool,* Pastel, 14" x 14"

A professor emeritus in mathematics at Dartmouth College, Robert Z. Norman, along with his wife, have generously made a substantial donation of Lockheed Martin Corporation shares to the general fund of the Pastel Society of America in memory of Robert's sister, Barbara Makanowitzky, PSA, much acclaimed for her dramatic pastel seascapes.

Barbara was the author of *The Spanish Cookbook, The Russian Cookbook, Tales of the Table, Requiem for a Spanish Village,* and *Napoleon and Talleyrand,* all published by Stein and Day and Prentice Hall. A graduate of Stanford University, she worked for the US State Department, living in Washington, DC; Munich; and Paris. Fluent in Russian, French, Spanish, and Catalan, she translated several Russian classics of Tolstoy, Turgenev, and Chekhov. In her later years, Barbara became a prolific artist and was published often in *Pastel Journal.* Barbara's preferred subjects were dramatic and turbulent depictions of sea, foam, and clouds.

The 43rd Annual catalog will feature a 2009 *Pastel Journal* article on Barbara Makanowitzky's pastels.

BOB GERBRACHT, PSA-MP

Bob Gerbracht, PSA-MP, Pastel Laureate of the Pastel Society of the West Coast, began teaching private classes and workshops in portrait and figure drawing and painting in 1979 in San Jose, California. His workshops have since taken him all over the United States and Mexico. He held a five-day workshop at the PSA pastel school in 1992.

Bob began studying portrait painting one night a week as a high school student in a W.P.A. government-sponsored class in Erie, Pennsylvania. A veteran of World War II, he then studied portrait and figure painting in Bamberg, Germany. He earned a BFA from Yale and an MFA from

"I AM NOT INTERESTED IN SHOWING THAT I CAN PAINT EVERY HAIR ON A PERSON'S HEAD, BUT I WOULD LIKE THE VIEWER TO WONDER HOW I PAINTED IT SO REALISTICALLY WITHOUT PAINTING EVERY HAIR."

— *Bob Gerbracht*

the University of Southern California. His pastels have been featured in numerous magazines and books, including *Best of Pastel* and *Best of Pastel 2*.

At the age of 90, Bob still teaches three classes a week. "I'm happiest when I'm teaching," he says. "When I wake up and it's a class day, it's going to be a good day." All his classes are based on direct observation of the model with an emphasis on "looking for colors most people aren't seeing."

Bob lives with his wife Delia in Pinole, California, and paints and teaches in his studio in San Francisco.

PASTEL SOCIETY OF AMERICA'S MISSION: We serve the pastel artist, her/his public, and the artistic community through education, example, and activism for the medium.

PSA'S STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: The Pastel Society of America (PSA) is a 501 (C) 3 non-profit educational organization that sets standards of professional excellence in studio practice and educates the public regarding the permanence and beauty of the pastel medium. PSA accomplishes its goals through certification, workshops, classes, demonstrations, and exhibitions, as well as information dissemination through its website, publications, and e-communications.

THINKING OUTSIDE THE PHOTO

Duane Wakeham

■ **Crystal Springs**

A while ago, a person on the PSA Facebook page asked whether landscape painters who are unable to paint *en plein air* are limited to copying their own photographs. While the inquiry was in reference to whose photos could be used, I was troubled by the use of the word *copying* because that approach is so prevalent.

During my more than 50 years as a painter of the Northern California landscape, I have always openly acknowledged working *with* photographs—but not copying them. The way in which I use photographs is illustrated in a series of images relating to my painting *Crystal Springs*, done as a demo during a PSA Annual a number of years ago. As I prepared for the demo, I thought it would be informative to combine elements from a group of photographs to create a new image—one that doesn't exist but is sufficiently characteristic of the locale to make it believable. Crystal Springs is a pair of artificial lakes that serve as a reservoir for San Francisco and are visible from Hwy 280 on which I commuted daily for more than 20 years while teaching at the college of San Mateo. During those

years I accumulated a great many photos of the area.

The image I created includes information from three photos dating from different years and from locations over a mile apart: a fog bank, a broad view of the upper lake and hills beyond, and an open field with oak trees (reversed to support the composition) to provide a suitable foreground.

In a 9″ x 13″ preliminary study, I combined selected elements from the three photos into a composition based on a series of parallel diagonal lines plus a stabilizing horizontal to provide the underlying abstract structure of the painting. Superimposed on that basic structure are shapes of various sizes that

serve as important design elements, as well as providing both descriptive information about the locale and indicators of spatial relationships. In addition to determining the placement of all shapes and spaces, the 15-minute study begins to explore potential color development.

The demonstration was done on a nearly full sheet of 300 lb Arches rough watercolor paper prepared with two coats of a mixture of gesso and pumice and tinted Venetian red. I quickly sketched in the basic composition—almost as a diagram and then did a loose partial underpainting of the darker shapes. I began building color freely, working all over the sheet to get color moving through the painting. When I
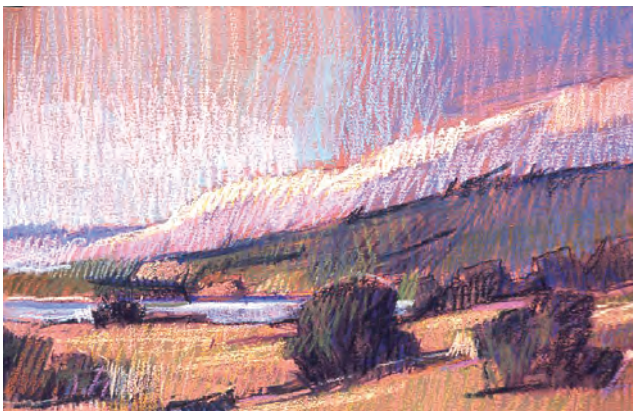
have a color in hand, I find other places to introduce it. Even arbitrary choices serve to strengthen the color composition and establish a sense of unity and harmony. The colors bear only minimal relationship to the source photos. During each work session, I work over the whole surface of the paper so that at the end of any working period the entire painting is developed to the same degree. Even in this early stage, I begin modifying the silhouettes of various shapes. Subject matter is of less importance than abstract considerations. No shape, no color exists just because *that's the way it is* in the real world or in a photograph if it does not contribute to the composition. And no shape or color is fixed. I want to maintain the option to make changes. Artists who complete one area before moving on to the next deprive themselves of that option.

The ultimate goal of my painting process is to manipulate shapes and colors into a harmonious and unified composition that conveys a convincing and inviting illusion of a landscape. Elements that initially were treated as two-dimensional are transformed into three-dimensional forms that appear to exist in three-dimensional space. The size and placement of every form, the choice and relationship of colors (hue, value, intensity, and temperature), and the application of each stroke of color pull the viewer past the foreground, across the middle ground, and into the background.

Achieving that goal results from continuous modifications and some significant final tweaking. Notice, for example, the change in the positioning of the shadowed island-like land mass coming from the left in relation to the sun-lit cliff behind it and the relocation of that focal point to the trees on the near side of the lake. Less obvious but equally interesting changes appear throughout the completed painting.

■ Above the coast, Santa Cruz

During the years that I've been painting California landscapes, I've accumulated an extensive collection of slides and digital photos that I use when working in the studio. A random viewing of images would clearly indicate that I take pictures, but definitely am not a skilled photographer. The first photo is not atypical of the kind of photographs I too often end up with.

If I painted by copying photographs, this one definitely would have been eliminated from consideration. However, the overall image—the view, the basic composition—was more than sufficiently interesting and I saw no reason to put the slide aside just because the color was bad.

Instead, in a series of three 15-minute 8" x 12" preliminary studies on Ersta sanded paper, which include the second and third photos, I began to explore color possibilities—a combination of orange, blue, and blue-violet—as well as introduce a stronger patterning of light and dark shapes.

In the completed painting below, three major elements from the original photo remain more-or-less intact—the tree mass in the upper left, the clump of trees to the right of the ravine, and the dark mass that fills the lower-right corner of the composition. But there are changes within each of those shapes. A major concern pictorially and compositionally was to open up the whole shrub-covered lower-left corner to make it visually more interesting, as well as to provide viewer access into the depth of the painting by alternating light against dark.

One of my goals is to always make every square inch of a painting interesting to look at, but not equally important, as evidenced in the treatment of the large, essentially open triangular shape that occupies the lower-left corner of the painting.
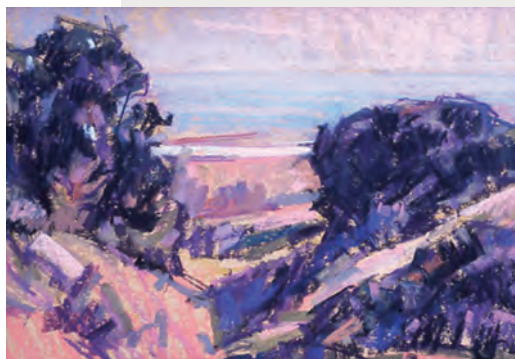
Duane Wakeham, retired professor of art history and painting at the College of San Mateo (CA), was elected to the Pastel Society of America Hall of Fame in 2000 and named Pastel Laureate by the Pastel Society of the West Coast in 2009. He has judged exhibitions, demonstrated, and taught pastel workshops across the US and in Canada.

Memory and Observation

Nancie King Mertz

Illume is a studio pastel using a photo reference, and as I say below, I'm a lousy photographer. In fact, that large purple thing on the right is my finger! However, it was the glow around my finger that prompted me to create this piece. My intent was to emphasize the glow on the water and push it up onto the structure of the bridge and buildings. Color was another element that I felt needed attention to give the image life. Note the addition of orange, red, blue, and olive to an otherwise drab photo palette.

Under Angle was inspired by a photo I took on a boat trip on the Chicago River and painted in my studio on textured Gatorboard prepped with transparent gesso and a tint of warm acrylic paint. What struck me in the photo were the primary colors, which I tried to push and explore in the painting.

Viewers of my work often ask, "Do you take photos on painting trips and then return to your studio to do the painting?" My response is that I do take photos, but I explain that I spend as much time as possible when traveling to actually paint en plein air, to truly capture the light and color that drew me to the site. More often, I reserve the photos to create larger pieces that would be problematic in the field (dimensions over 20"x24").

I've found that my very unprofessional photos serve only to capture scale and value. The color must come from my memory of the site and from the hundreds of plein air pieces that came before. If you do paint plein air, compare your paintings with photos you've taken and note how flat the shadows in the photos are. You'll probably also note that the lights are missing color, as well.

My intent, when in the field, is to complete the piece in one session of less than three hours. The light at the

end of the session is totally different and, frankly, by that point I'm ready to look at something else! Rarely do I take a photo of the scene I'm painting as I feel it's burned into my brain after such lengthy observation, and any adjustments that seem necessary after the painting session can be made from the recalled image. It's when I'm on the fly that I take quick reference photos to capture a scene that I don't have time to paint or that I feel calls for a large format.

When I do rely on these photos for

reference, past observation is called into play to give the shadows and lights the colors we see from direct observation. It's worthwhile to note that when you directly observe a scene, your point of attraction is your center of interest. When you stare at that point, your vision of what surrounds it is somewhat faded or blurred. If you squint at that point, you reveal the details that are most important—Richard Schmid calls it the secret squint. A photo, on the other hand, tends to make all elements of the scene important and sharp. If you give all areas of your painting equal importance and detail, it is often apparent to the viewer that you worked closely from a photo. So here's a tip: Reduce the details around the center of interest and your studio paintings will appear more like plein air work.

My preference always is to paint on site, to forever connect the painting to its environment, the quirky things that happen during the session, and the funny things people say as they observe. However, climate and daily demands of life often push me into the studio where I strive to turn my photos into a useful tool to recall the elements observed when I was on location.

Because I paint a lot of paintings, people often assume I travel a lot too. While I wish this were the case, it's not. I've simply learned to have my travel set-up ready to go at a moment's notice. Short drives to visit friends for a day or two always result in a couple of paintings. A trip to the dentist or hair salon in downtown Chicago often inspires a quick cityscape on the street. As the Scouts say, "Be prepared," and your plein air and studio work will be better for it.

A favorite place to paint is along Florida's Forgotten Coast during the 10-day painting invitational each May. We explore the Panhandle along the coast and into the remote rural areas for inspiration. *Sunlit Path* is a plein air piece done there, behind someone's garage. The sunlight, and the shapes it created, pulled me right in.

We were lucky to be invited to a wedding in San Diego, at *Point Loma*. I painted the couple as they received their vows on the beach. This is a plein air piece painted along the coast one morning, on mounted Wallis.

Nancie King Mertz (PSA-MP, CPP-M, IAPS Master Circle) has spent her lifetime painting and running her gallery and frame shop. She has traveled to nearly 20 countries and around the US for inspiration. However, Chicago remains a favorite city to explore and paint, where she was twice named Artist of the Year. Her work can often be seen on Chicago-based TV. She will be teaching a workshop, Plein Air in NYC, October 1-3, 2016, at the Pastel Society of America. www.NancieKingMertz.com

CTA: Constant Texting Addiction is from a series of four or five photos taken while waiting for the train in downtown Chicago. The busy background was knocked-down into simple light and dark shapes to become a subtle reference for the train platform and rails. It was the figures that I wanted to develop to tell the story of our phone addiction. This was painted on textured Gatorboard prepared with textured transparent gesso and deep red acrylic, applied in a random manner with a wide brush.

Old Hollywood is a studio painting on grey ampersand board. I've done a few plein air pieces while there, but this was from a photo taken on the fly. I pushed the direct and reflected orange light, balancing it with the complementary cool blue and allowed much of the grey board to show through…as a result this piece seemed to paint itself!

Slave or Master?

Richard McKinley

PHOTOGRAPHY IS OFTEN CRITICIZED FOR HAVING RUINED A GENERATION OF painters. Whether you agree or disagree, it goes without saying that it has had a profound effect on the representational art world. Even artists who never rely on it as reference while painting have to concur that it has profoundly affected the way in which we view the world.

Recent generations have been bombarded with photographic representations of the world. Printed material, motion pictures, and the advent of television have all ingrained photography into our subconscious and altered our perception of reality. The human eye is only capable of seeing what the mind allows; images integrate with memories to form beliefs. We can only imagine what the world must have appeared like to artists before the advent of photography.

In "Twilight of the Bad Boy," in the February 2006 issue of *Time* magazine, artist David Hockney shares his feelings about the shortcomings of photography when it comes to representing the visible world. "The camera can't see space," he says. "It sees surfaces. People see space, which is much more interesting."

Hockney's point is the crux of why so many of us expound on the importance of observation and painting from life. When we work one-on-one with our subject matter, we perceive space and attempt to portray it within our artwork. When we work solely from the photograph, we can easily forget to interject that perception. This is especially true for the beginner. The efforts to master a medium can lead to an over-dependence on photographic reference and ultimately produce flat, uninteresting outcomes. While it can prove helpful in the beginning to copy photographic reference material, it is imperative, as technical progress is made, to interject the human perception of space.

For some artists, this entails long sessions painting directly from nature, en plein air. For others, it involves compositional thumbnail sketches and value notations in a sketchbook. But for a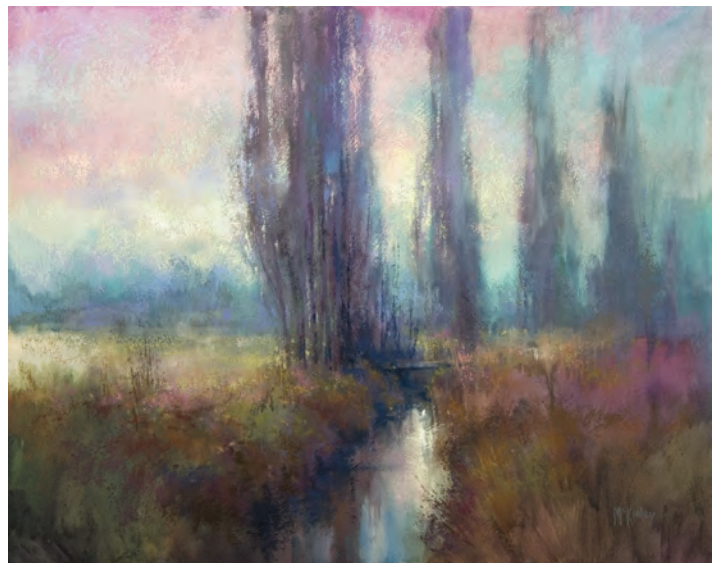ll, it necessitates quiet time spent in sensitive observation, allowing all the human senses to interact with nature. Photography can play its part but ultimately must be overridden by those internalized perceptions. Otherwise, the final painting will be only an artificial representation of surfaces, as Hockney points out.

I have and will continue to use photography as a reminder when working in the studio. It is also a valid form of artistic expression in itself. Even though David Hockney explained its shortcomings, he has used it for some of his most well-received pieces of artwork—his large photographic mosaics. The key is that he understands its limitations and has never forgotten the importance of human perception in representing the visible world.

Winter Light, Pastel, 16" x 20"

Historically, as the science of photography developed, artists were quick to adapt the technology to their needs. The past is ripe with famous artists whose studios contained photographic references. The difference for these historic painters is that they were also well trained, most having come out of the European atelier system or having apprenticed under master painters. For them, photography was a tool, a means of recording references in which they could interject a human perspective. It is of note that the early twentieth century photographers who wished to elevate photography to an art form mimicked painting. Albert Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, and George Seeley were but a few involved in the photographic movement referred to as pictorialism. Many of their photographic works are hard to differentiate from an etching or monochromatic painting.

As America embraced modernism, photography followed suit and a new movement emerged: Group F64. This movement, also touted by Stieglitz, promoted the idea of unmanipulated straight photography. What the lens is capable of recording is far different from the human eye, evidenced by the masterful photographs of Edward Weston and Ansel Adams. These razor sharp, highly focused, and often extremely contrasted images make us look at the world differently and definitely elevate photography to its own art form.

Camera technology has continued to evolve with the advent of digital photography, providing the capability to quickly record reference material, but as serious representational painters, we must never forget the importance of quiet contemplation with our subject matter. Analyze the aspects of focus,

This photo has been the reference for many interpretive paintiings.

The irrigation canals that once threaded across the Rogue River Valley of southern Oregon have almost completely disappeared, having given way to housing developments. I have referenced this one photograph many times to spark my memories of this long-gone location. Instead of dutifully rendering the image, I rely on my memories and follow intuition as to where to take the painting. While I have painted this scene many times, and plan to do many more, every experience from this reference photo has lead to a new artistic experience.

Winter Morning, Pastel, 20" x 20"

Notes of Turquoise, Pastel, 12" x 16"

Introspection, Pastel, 16" x 12"

value contrast, and color nuance from the human perspective. The more sensitive we become to these, the better able we are to interpret from photo reference. It is important to remember that photographs are just that: a point of reference. They should be a catalyst to memory and intent. The goal is to use them, not be dependent upon them.

One of the most frequently uttered compliments the well-meaning public bestows is, "That painting is as good as a photograph." It is curious that we have gone from comparing the photograph to fine art painting to comparing painting to the photograph. In response, I like to smile and say, "I like to think it is better."

For many painters, the camera is a curse. For others, it is a useful tool. While it might be nice to fantasize about what the world would be like without its influence, one thing is certain: Technology will continue to develop, and innovative artists will employ it. Instead of being photography's slave, I encourage you to understand its limitations, harness its attributes, and spend time in contemplative observation with your subject matter.

Richard McKinley, PSA-HF, PSWC-PL
Richard McKinley has more than 40 years of teaching experience, is a PSA Hall of Fame inductee, a PSWC Pastel Laureate and Distinguished Pastelist, and honorary member of Degas Pastel Society. He has been featured in numerous national/international art publications, a frequent contributing editor to *Pastel Journal,* and author of *Pastel Pointers, Top Secrets for Beautiful Pastel Paintings* and *The Landscape Paintings of Richard McKinley: Selected Works in Oil and Pastel.* Visit: www.mckinleystudio.com for more information.

The Good, The Bad, and The Boring

Barbara Genco

Bill Creevy uses an unexpected photo resource for many of his pastel paintings. Here he talks with Barbara Genco about his use of "disposable" digital and print resources as tools for art making

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

BG: When did you first think about using Google Maps with Street View as a reference for your landscape work?
BC: I enjoy surfing the web. Google Maps with Street View was launched about 2007 and I tried it right away. It's an online map and address-finding resource. You type in an address or an approximate location in a city or state and Google maps it for you. It can take you to almost any place in the US and Europe (as long as it has a searchable address) without leaving the comfort and convenience of your studio. And it's available 24/7. The views, taken from cameras mounted on top of moving cars, are shot between 10am and 4pm on a sunny day—so it's never winter!

BG: Couldn't this device be a disadvantage since it only shows mid-day light in good weather?
BC: Yes. That would be big disadvantage if one were looking for information on the effects of light in mornings and sunsets and on weather conditions, such as rain and snow. But as I am essentially making up the weather conditions from my imagination and my knowledge of firm artistic principles (light/shadow, mass, form, value, and so on), it is no disadvantage at all!

BG: What is it about "disposable" photo resources that make them so useful?
BC: When I consider a photo reference, I always opt for the boring, non-"arty"

image. If a photo is well done, well composed, aesthetically pleasing, beautifully printed, or even one of a famous iconic view, I have no use for it. The photographer has already done all the work for me. Why would I want to reproduce it? Photo reference material is most useful to me when it feels disposable. I like to work from snapshots, family photos, yearbooks, postcards, stamps, old car ads, encyclopedias, dictionaries, old newspapers, even the Oklahoma State University Livestock site http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds and weather cataloging sites like http://www.clouds-online.com/. Some may consider these boring because they are mostly devoid of art and generally are utilitarian resources. Like them, the Street View photography is free of any artistic intent. It gives me the freedom to rely on my own artistry and creativity. I also love that the online photography is bad photography. The pictures jump around on the screen; they're easily distortable. They're taken by a machine—a robot with no human sensibility whatsoever. So I can get the information I need without another person's aesthetic or skill getting in my way. For me, boring images are often the best!

Figure 1. The interior of Ronnie's Cajun Café in Eunice LA was featured in the HBO "True Detective" series starring Mathew McConaughey. I thought it would be fun if I could do a painting of its exterior. I took a 45-second ride down to Eunice to see what Ronnie's actually looked like. Disappointingly, the exterior was unimpressive, flat, and in a bad shadow. Not really useful for my purposes.

Figure 2. Ronnie's #2
Just out of curiosity, I decided to turn my Google Map Street View on a 360 degree spin to see what was also in the area. In this capture you can see the edge of Ronnie's on the left and the oncoming traffic on Ronald Reagan Hwy. to the right.

Figure 3. Ronnie's #3
At 180 degrees the highway imagery turned out to be more interesting. What really caught my attention was a bright red pick-up truck. I could see immediate potential for a dominant foreground image (the red truck) setting up a strong mid-space relationship with the second lane traffic and the far side filling station. It was a made-to-order composition I hadn't expected.

Figure 4. *Ronnie's v1* 9x12 Pastel on Black Multimedia Board
Though this no longer depicts Ronnie's I kept the name and focused on the truck. I used a black board for this 1st version to evoke late afternoon. I added interest via an 'invented' thundercloud coming in from the upper left. I retained light direction and intensity. Red truck is more detailed than the rest of the painting.

Figure 5. *Ronnie's v2* 12 x 16 Pastel on Multimedia Board
I opted for a white board and added more details here. The thunderheads needed power and I wanted to convey a greater sense of the approaching storm. I paid attention to the row of gas stations, car washes, etc. I kept my red truck and, for counterpoint, added a more finished silver-toned SUV. Both were in the reference photo. Both versions are suggested by the Google image; they are not reproductions of it.

Figure 5

BG: How does mundane imagery fit into your artistic approach?

BC: The key to understanding my artistic approach and creative intent is to realize that drawing is at the heart of everything I do, and how I draw determines the nature and choice of my reference material. Drawing for me means the process of making something real from nothing. I may or may not have an idea about what I'm going to do when I start a drawing—whether it's a still life, landscape, animal, figure, or whatever. All my drawings start off as freehand scribbling, gesture, and random mark making. It doesn't matter what the medium is, my work always starts off as seemingly chaotic jumble of marks. Within this jumble of scribbles there are no edges or outlines. Any color present at this stage is arbitrary. My aesthetic and technique is the polar opposite of planned work, the antithesis of tracing, line drawing, or photo projection.

BG: After this first stage, what techniques and tools do you use to move to a finished painting?

BC: In my pastels, I rely mostly on value and texture; color is not so important. My textures largely come from my pastel application. My work is an amalgam of marks, scribbles, cross-hatchings, smears, color dustings, scrapes, and other techniques. I also generate texture

Figure 4

by "creative fixing"—that is, I use fixative to purposely create darks. I sometimes pour fixative on full strength. I like to heighten less-effective passages with a layer of pastel ground and let it mix with the bottom colors. I like to work over it with fresh colors when dry. I also like to smear the pastel around with water for wash effects. My technique doesn't always align with the traditional definition of what a pastel painting is.

BG: Tell us how your online resource folds into your technique?

BC: The map device provides a wide-angle photo of the address you enter; it's highly interactive. Any user can move the view in a 360-degree circle around the subject and move the point of view up or down, in and out. These functions can imitate in some way human movement in

real life, real time. I use a screen capture function to capture and download images of interest. This function also lets me see images in a continuum. I can take a virtual stroll or a slow drive through the area or explore other possible subjects in the virtual neighborhood.

I use it as my main digital plein air resource. I often set my paintings in the outdoors, but I wouldn't consider myself a pure landscape artist (that is, one that focuses on and is committed to painting only the natural world *in situ*). I am far more interested in the human-made, built landscape, and with how objects exist within nature rather than in nature itself. Cars, animals, houses, trains, diners, factories, water towers, and so on, all interest me far more than romantic vistas or seashores.

Since Street View sticks more or less to the curb, it's a good way to see the built world and the type of environments I like to paint. My work is very studio-intensive. This digital approach gives me the flexibility and opportunities I need to make the kind of art that truly interests me. I filter these images through my own artistic sensibility. The choice is cosmic. I can move things around, remove objects or cars, or introduce something from a different place altogether. Now, I don't mean going into Photoshop to make up a totally new working photograph to reproduce in pastel but rather getting bits and pieces

Figure 8

Figure 8. Original Google Street View photo of the corner of Soniat St. and Freret St. in New Orleans. Buildings like this one are scattered all over New Orleans. I was attracted to the boarded-up abandoned condition of this house baking in the hot August sun. I liked the faded peach color and the sharp contrasts of light and shadow under a bright sky. The Street View camera exaggerated the perspective and made the house more angular.
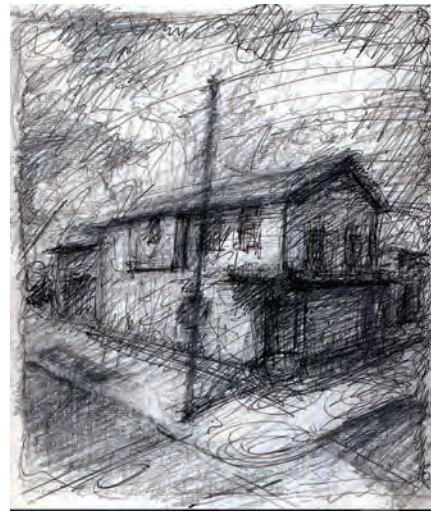
Figure 9. Study for *Corner House* This is a preliminary pencil sketch. I exaggerated the perspective even more and made sure the sky and the house would all be drawn in a loose style. I liked this sketch and was determined to keep that freehand quality in the final pastel version

Figure 10. Completed pastel. *Corner House* 12" x 16" pastel on Multimedia Board: In this final pastel version, I employed the loose, gestural technique of the preliminary sketch. I cranked up the color intensity. I wanted to keep this painting as simple as possible without sacrificing mood. This tactile, cross-hatching pastel application helped me preserve the luminous quality of the neighborhood.

Figure 9

Figure 10

from other screen captures and keeping them handy to use where and when I want them.

BG: Though you've made this resource sound useful and interesting, I can see it's not for everyone.
BC: Exactly! This is not for painters whose art making consists of slavishly reproducing an unchanging photo reference. I have seen far too many landscapes and cityscapes that default to exactly what must have been in that original photo. An artist must take control of the reference. Online I get multiple views and essential contextual information about a particular site

or locale, which I couldn't get from a single photo. The online images are the prose. The artist must take the information and make his own sense of it. The artist decides what to paint. Not the photographer. The artist chooses the palette. The artist adds the mood, the emotion. . .the poetry.

BG: Any closing observations?
BC: I consider this online resource just one among many tools available to the pastelist. As I have become less mobile and my work more studio-intensive, this tool, which was not designed as a photo resource, offers me independence in my own terms. The images are robotic and

boring; they are free of clichés; and they are never the standard, tired, hackneyed, "scenic" views. As an artist, I now find this tool indispensable. You can't help but be original.

Bill Creevy, PSA-MP HFH, is a much-awarded artist and author of two best-selling books, *The Pastel Book* and *The Oil Painting Book,* both published by Watson & Guptill. Bill has published articles and reviews in *American Artist, Pastel Journal, Art in America,* and *Artist Magazine.*

Barbara A. Genco is a visiting associate professor at Pratt Institute School of Library and Information Science, chair of the Salmagundi Club Library Committee, past president of the Association for Library Service to Children, and a distinguished librarian with 40 years of experience.

Unreliable Witness

Jeanne Rosier Smith

There's a clear bias these days toward plein air painting as the more "authentic" form of making art. Certainly, it's essential for good artists to work from life some of the time; my hours spent standing in the wind on a sandy beach or in the shade at the edge of a meadow are among my happiest as an artist. However, where I live in Massachusetts, winter wind chills can fall well below zero. Yet even if plein air were a year-round option for me, I would still rely heavily on photos in my own work. I relish the quiet peace and focus I achieve only in my studio. And my favorite subject, waves, hold still much better in photographs than in real life.

I have found, through years of studio painting and teaching, that there are two keys to working with photographs. First, we need to understand the pitfalls of photographs as references, with their inherent distortions and misrepresentations. Second, and even more important, we need to adjust our relationship as artists to our photos; while photos provide useful material, they are not "truth" to be slavishly copied. We are in control, not the photo. Once we begin to understand our photographs as raw material to be manipulated in the service of our art, the possibilities are endless.

When we paint from life, our time is limited, so we make quicker decisions. Faced with the infinite details of nature in three dimensions, it's impossible to copy all that's before us. We make instant artistic choices about what to focus on and what to eliminate. As artists, we are in control of our own vision, of how we compose a scene, and of what we put down on our suface.

This sense of vision and artistic control is what we need to remember when we work with photographs. Photos give us the luxury of unchanging light and unlimited time, plus a flat picture plane, which makes for easier drawing. Armed with a camera, we can record enough information in one afternoon for six months of painting. However, these comforts come with a price.

Photos are unreliable witnesses. They present part of the truth, but they never tell the whole story. Photos lie,

distort, misremember, and misrepresent. Atmospheric perspective and subtleties of color temperature, clearly visible in life, vanish when we try to capture them digitally. And in addition to possible distortions in perspective due to foreshortening and parallax, cameras are particularly unreliable at recording three elements critical to artists: color, value, and edge quality.

Photographs can help jog the memory, but the artist's efforts to match the colors they show us are misguided and should be abandoned. Photos simplify and flatten color, never adequately

Correct cropping, heightened contrast, and richer color all improved the source photo here. I eliminated the figure to focus attention on the crashing wave. *Water's Edge*, 24" x 24"

To focus on the beautiful light and shadow on the foreground boat, I zoomed in, straightened the horizon, eliminated the back boat, and removed the top of the front boat. I adjusted pastel color to enhance the sense of sunlight, pushing warmer colors in the sun and cooler colors in the shadows. *Parked*, 6" x 8"

TIPS FOR PAINTING FROM PHOTOS

• Determine your focus. Find the single thing you want your painting to convey.

• Create a thumbnail/ notan, which expresses your visual idea. That, together with your memory and photo, are the raw material for your painting.

• Squint to simplify. In life, eye and brain edit out less important details. Photos record all details evenly, essential or not. So squinting at your photo is as important as squinting when en plein air.

• Don't copy, interpret. You are painting fine art, not "scenes." The photo contains way too much information: edit, weed out, adjust, don't let the photo control you, take ownership of the painting.

reflecting reality. Greens, especially, often appear too blue and too flat in photos and need an infusion of both warmer and cooler colors to appear realistic. Skies often present monochromatically in photographs, when close observation of the actual sky reveals changes in depth of hue from overhead to horizon, and often from one area of the sky to another depending on the time of day.

Two strategies help me compensate for the inadequate color in my photo references. First, I make sure to paint outdoors periodically, because close color study from life is the best way to learn to "read" better color into my photos in the studio. Second, I paint in my head—all the time, wherever I am—driving, walking, in conversation. I constantly ask myself, what color would I use to paint that? Such practice sharpens observation skills and allows me to rely less on the dim mirror of my photographs. And when I truly need to break free from the literal color of photos, I switch my photo to greyscale.

Photographs also distort values. Unlike the human eye, which adjusts quickly and accurately to constantly changing light conditions, most cameras are ill-equipped to see subtleties in the light while preserving depth in shadowed areas. Because of this, the value range of most photographs ends up exaggerated. If the camera's focus is in the light, dark areas will go black; and if the focus is in the shadows, lights get washed out. These difficulties aren't insurmountable. Just remember to adjust in your painting for the exaggerated dark/light value contrasts in your photos, and when shooting on very sunny days, take two exposures to ensure adequate lighting on everything.

Perhaps most misleading of all is the overall sharp picture produced by the typical autofocus setting on most cam-

Color here is completely interpretive, as the overcast day dulled the photo. *Currents*, 16" x 20"

- **Adjust for your photo's weaknesses—**
e.g. faded skies, too-dark darks.

- **Use the camera to crop—**
when you're taking photos and afterward.

- **Always use your own photos.**
Taking photos is an art form in itself. It involves framing and editing choices, and you retain the experience of being there. You're less likely to be a slave to the photo if you are aware that it's just one view of the scene. Working from someone else's photo is like working blind.

- **Too much detail?**
Include just essential elements, then go "shopping" in the photo for the most important details and simplify the rest.

eras. While cameras can be set up to mimic the focal range of the human eye, with sharply defined edges where our vision is focused and softening edges at the periphery, most photographs show everything equally in "perfectly" clear, sharp, glorious detail. This creates a special challenge for artists. Photos provide way too much information, defining everything and distinguishing nothing. As with color and value, we need to remember that these sharp edges are not accurate to our perception of reality. They present us with a mass of unorganized information.

So it is left to the artist to impose order when working with a photo. We must remember and reveal what caught our eye in the first place. We must reimagine the scene and adjust for atmosphere, color, perspective, values, and edges. We must choose which edges to lose, and place sharper edges where we want to direct the focus.

When composing a painting, the artist not the photo reference should control the story. In addition to using my photo, I create a thumbnail sketch or a notan. This sharpens my composition and expresses my visual idea. I often make a few notes on the idea or mood I want to convey in the painting. Armed

with these raw materials, I begin to paint. This creative direction marks the difference between copying a photo and using a photo as a reference to create a painting.

As we adjust to the camera's limitations we become more aware of the power of our own vision.

Jeanne Rosier Smith is a Signature member of the PSA, the Connecticut Pastel Society, and Pastel Painters Society of Cape Cod, an IAPS Master's Circle member, and a frequent contributor to art publications. She maintains a teaching studio in Sudbury, Massachusetts, and teaches workshops nationally and abroad, including a travel trip to Croatia this September. You can see her work and learn about her workshops at: www.jeannesmithart.com

THE FLEETING EXPRESSION

Wende Caporale

Since the advent of commercially produced photographs in the mid-nineteenth century, artists, most notably the Impressionists, began to explore photographic imagery as a source of reference for their work. There have also been scholarly studies speculating that an optical device such as a *camera obscura* was used as early as the seventeenth century by the artist Johannes Vermeer and others. With advances in the photographic medium, not only are many of today's artists using photography as a tool, some are pushing the medium and recording visual effects such as halation and microscopic detail. So the question is, "When should photography be used as a tool and how can photographs be utilized effectively?"

There are advantages to working from photographs, such as the ability to record fleeting movement, difficult to capture by mere observation. There is no better way to effectively acquire a great deal of visual information in a short period of time; for instance, documenting scenes from travel. But what steps does the artist take to avoid "copying" the photograph and instead inject the image with the intangible that transcends the two-dimensional image?

Dealing specifically with portraits or figurative work, photography enables the artist to record a fleeting expression or gesture that would be tedious at best for a subject to sustain for the extended period of time required for sittings. In fact, most commissioned portraiture done by artists today is accomplished with the use of photography, which is then sometimes combined with live sittings. As much as photography seems to be the ideal solution for convenience and providing substantial information, there are drawbacks that need to be recognized and dealt with. The most effective way of countering difficulties, including distortion and homogenized color, is to first develop the

Wende Caporale, *Emily*, Pastel on board, 34" x 44"

Wende Caporale, *Jonathan*, Pastel on board, 34" x 44"

necessary skills by working from live models and synthesizing this into the process.

With this in mind, I asked my husband, Daniel Greene, about his experience with photographic reference. It was more than 50 years ago that Dan first became associated with Portraits, Inc. in New York City. The work he was commissioned to do for the group was done in the studio from live sittings unless he was asked to paint a posthumous portrait from available photographs. I queried him about his method. "I asked clients to gather all the photos of the subject they could; the photos did not need to be in colour. I would then have a meeting during which I looked through all the photos to determine which ones had enough information and appeal to serve as the basis for the

portrait. The most important fact I learned was that the client must like the chosen photo. If they didn't, they would not like the finished portrait. I acquired information about the subject's coloring, physical characteristics, and biographical material so that I could emphasize the appropriate personality. Before starting the portrait, I would have a professional enlargement made of the head and hands so that details were more clearly seen. The portrait proceeded in the same manner as my approach to painting from life; drawing first, working from dark to middletone to light with colors that suggested the proper skintone." It is important to mention here that for the first two decades of Dan's career, his portraits were exclusively from live sittings. It was not until he moved out of New York City that he began to incorporate photography into his process for the convenience it provided.

My own experience took a different trajectory in that I was trained as an illustrator, which involved using photo reference. Nonetheless, I have spent many years working from life and have no doubt that this latter experience enables me to more faithfully represent my subject based on the accumulated knowledge of form and anatomy. Photographs tend to distort and manipulate reality. Values are often exaggerated and the color homogenized, factors that have to be taken into account to avoid making the result look like a direct "copy" of a photograph. Dan explains how he approaches this challenge; "I find it useful to put the photo reference in a copy machine and print several values of the photo. One will be very light, which will isolate the deepest dark areas, one extremely dark to expose deep middletones and highlights, and three additional interim settings to bring out the light/dark patterns and emphasize subtle values. Using plumb lines or a grid on the photo can also be very informative, as is view-

Daniel Greene, *Jean - Grand Central*, Pastel on granular paper, 24" x 18"

Daniel Greene, *Fur Collar - Subway*, Pastel on wood, 16" x 16"

Photography proves to be especially useful when creating a composition with multiple figures. When I have had occasion to do a portrait with more than one figure, I often begin the photo shoot by posing the group to create a strong interactive composition and photograph my subjects together. After reviewing the images, I photograph them individually to be certain that I have the best possible pose and expression for each of my subjects. As you can imagine when photographing a group of people, it's rare to have everyone individually looking their best in one image. So in this case, I create the composition with my camera first rather than create a composite of individual photos. On the other hand, I have also worked with individual photo references to create a composite composition, taking care to maintain the same eye level and consistent lighting when amalgamating the several images together. I, as the artist, must also envision how the figures relate to each other in space to determine their

ing both the painting and photo simultaneously in a mirror."

The information regarding value that Dan describes is valid and informative, but it does not negate the necessity to develop an understanding of the affects of light on form and anatomy based on observation. When dealing with color, I find that even the best photographs fall short of the nuanced color observed when studying a sitter. During the initial sitting with my subject, in addition to taking hundreds of photos, I make notes regarding their skintones, eye, and hair colour. Many portrait artists make rapid color studies of the sitter in addition to the photography session. As much as photography has advanced, the naked eye still perceives more nuance than the single lens of a camera. Once I see the photographs, I am always a little disappointed in the color and tend to take some artistic license, usually pushing more saturated intrinsic color onto my subject than may actually exist. This I consider my personal and necessary role as an artist; it is the way I see the world and wish to represent it. Once I have taken the portrait as far as I can using photographic reference, I have a final sitting with my subject. Frequently, the hair and eyes can be lightened, and I often lighten the shadows.

THE FLEETING EXPRESSION

proper scale. Many artists are skillful at manipulating photos using Photoshop to create new composite compositions.

In our current world of technological innovations, it would be hard to ignore the possibilities that photographic devices and techniques provide to the artist. Using good judgment combined with unlimited imagination, the artist can create works of art that transcend the click of a camera.

The work of **Wende Caporale, PSA-MP,** has appeared in *American Artist, International Artist, Pastel Journal, Portrait Highlights,* and *Pastel Artist International,* as well as in several books. She is author of *Painting Children's Portraits in Pastel* and is included in *Who's Who in American Art.* She teaches at the Portrait Society of America, as well as conducting classes and workshops nationwide. Wende is president of the Artists' Fellowship and a member of the PSA board of governors.

Daniel E. Greene, PSA-MP, HFH, is author of *Pastel,* and *The Art of Pastel.* He has received the John Singer Sargent Award from the American Society of Portrait Artists and the Gold Medal of the American Portrait Society, as well as the Gold Medal of the Salmagundi Club. Dan's work appears in more than 700 public and private collections worldwide. His subjects have included leaders of government, banking, education, and industry.

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The Butler Institute of American Art will select artwork from the 2015 PSA *43rd Annual Juried Exhibition: Enduring Brilliance!* to be shown at the Butler's Flora B. Giffuni Gallery of American Pastels in Youngstown, Ohio, from late 2015 into early 2016.

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