



John Pototschnik Fine Art

Newsletter

Visiting the 19th State INDIANA

INDIANA EXHIBITION JURIED BY TEXAN

BY JOHN POTOTSCHNIK
EDITED BY JUDITH SMITH

My wife, Marcia, and I flew to Indiana in early June. I had been invited to juror the 32nd Annual Indiana Heritage Arts Exhibition in Nashville, a town in Brown County, about one hour south of Indianapolis.

IHA was formed in 1979 to foster the state of Indiana's art heritage. It is committed to do this through its living artists by sponsoring exhibits, workshops, and various educational programs. This annual exhibition is its premier art event, open only to present or former Indiana residents.

My being selected as juror for the 32nd Annual Exhibition was a distinct honor taken very seriously by me. With the legacy of the artists who founded the Brown County Art Colony in the 1900's in mind, IHA seeks the best of traditional and representational art that Indiana has to offer. Approximately 380 paintings were submitted. When I first entered the Brown County Art Gallery and saw all of these works on display, my immediate reaction was, "Wow! How in the world am I going to judge this? There is so much good art."

The exhibition space allows room for around 120 paintings. My immediate task was to eliminate 260 of these paintings! Thankfully I had a great professional staff to help me. They remained neutral, never expressing their opinions of my selections until I had to make a choice between three incredible paintings by the same artist. Each artist was allowed only one award. It was difficult. When I finally decided, I got a cheer on the one that I selected. It was the piece they had all wanted to be chosen. Some time passed and I asked how many paintings had been eliminated. I was told only 50. "Oh, my goodness", I thought. "I need to get ruthless and get this done."



These are the Indiana Heritage Arts board members and helpful staff that assisted in the judging process. Left to right: Brigitte Halvorsen, Jay Carter, Latty Newkirk, Jim Ross (Show Chairman), Donna Tackett (IHA President), Ken Harker, Georgia Davis, Lyn Letsinger-Miller, and John Pototschnik (Juror)

Thankfully none of the artists were present to see how quickly I began eliminating pieces. If one considers how much effort went into each work, it would not be pleasant to see that work merely brushed aside so quickly. It took three hours to narrow the group to 120 paintings. Next I had to choose the top 24. Each of these 24 artists would be awarded a monetary prize. Three were to be selected from this group as finalists. Finally, the "Best of Show" was to be chosen from those three. I selected Ken Bucklew's "Overlook Near Freedom" to receive the "Best of Show" designation. This is truly an incredible painting that I was continually drawn back to.

It was only after all of the selections were made that I asked about the winning artists. I learned that Mr. Bucklew's history was particularly interesting. Now in his 50's, he had displayed a natural talent for drawing and painting while in elementary school. However, as a teenager, he sustained a severe spinal cord injury in a diving accident. The injury resulted in total paralysis from his neck down. Many months of therapy and rehabilitation were required in order for him to achieve sufficient mobility in order to be able to care for himself. Though he became self sufficient, the injury left Bucklew with a significant loss of coordination, strength, and mobility. In addition, the injury left him with profound loss of feeling and dexterity in his fingers and hands. Bucklew overcame these limitations by developing upper arm and shoulder controls which allow him to manipulate a paint brush.



I was pleased when I learned that the Board of Directors for the Brown County Art Gallery chose to purchase "Overlook Near Freedom" for its permanent collection. I hope that you, too, enjoy Ken's winning painting.

FREEDOM

By Jeanette M. Johnson

More than the dew-kissed rose outside your door.
 More than holding hands with your beloved.
 More than a cool drink of water in July.
 More than the joy of picnics in the back yard.
 More than the taste of Granny's fried chicken.
 It is the freedom to see, smell and taste that freedom.

Like a photograph that captures your soul.
 Like chocolate ice cream in a crispy waffle cone.
 Like good jazz on the court house lawn.
 Like the 4th of July and flags in a small town.
 Like the sight of the Statue of Liberty.
 It is the freedom to feel the emotions that come with the adventure.

Sounds like Celine Dion in concert.
 Sounds like the words...I love you!
 Sounds like a baby's first words.
 Sounds like the sea waves crashing on the beaches.
 Sounds like waterfalls in Paradise.
 It is the freedom to hear all that surrounds us.

Touching old memories in the attic.
 Touching your child's face with a gentle hand.
 Touching the violin strings and breathing life into the notes.
 Touching the keyboard and writing about visions and journeys.
 Touching paint to canvas until Creation sings.
 It is the freedom to create and appreciate life.

Paying our dues by serving our country.
 Paying the price by being prayer warriors.
 Paying the price of honor in our decisions.
 Paying the price of love with patience and mercy
 Paying the price of tears at the gravesides of our fallen heroes.
 It is the price that Freedom costs...everything from everyone!

Jeanette is a faithful reader of the Newsletter and lives in Oklahoma

Making Judgments

A good painting is more than an exhibition of technical dexterity. A successful painting also has intellectual and emotional components.

Here are some things I consider when judging a painting:

CONCEPT:

Clarity of Subject: What is it? Is the subject accurately represented and in proper relationship to every other element in the painting?

Clarity of Communication: What is the artist communicating? Is that message clear and is the mood (value and color) consistent with the artist's concept?

COMPOSITION: Is the subject organized in a pleasing and interesting way on the canvas? Is there a center of interest?

DRAWING: Are all elements of the painting accurately drawn in correct proportion and perspective to one another?

VALUES: Is there a convincing and unequal distribution of lights, darks and middle tones? Is there a predominant value?

COLOR: Is the color harmonious, beautifully orchestrated and compatible with subject and mood?

TECHNIQUE: Is there technical mastery in the handling of the medium?

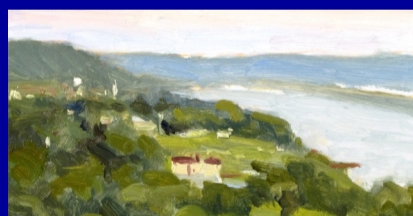
PRESENTATION: Is the painting presented well? Does the frame contribute to the overall concept?

Exploring the Countryside

When I travel, just about every trip becomes a business trip. I've painted in England, Spain, Portugal, and many U.S. states. Indiana now becomes the latest location.

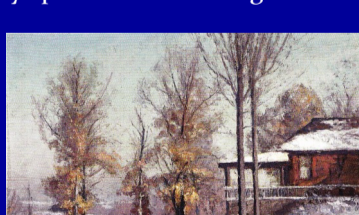
After landing in Indianapolis, Marcia and I headed south to the historic town of Madison on the Ohio River. We spent the night in Clifty Falls State Park at the Clifty Inn. My first painting, from the balcony of our fourth floor room, overlooked the Ohio River. The next morning, stepping out on the balcony, the singing of birds seemed amplified as I stood suspended in a fog so dense, even the balcony railing was indistinct.

In Nashville, we stayed at the Artists Colony Inn, kind of a resurrection of the old Pittman Inn of the early 1900's. I had the great



pleasure of meeting Jay and Ellen Carter, who conceived the idea of building this Inn fashioned after the original. The Inn has many examples of early Indiana art on its walls.

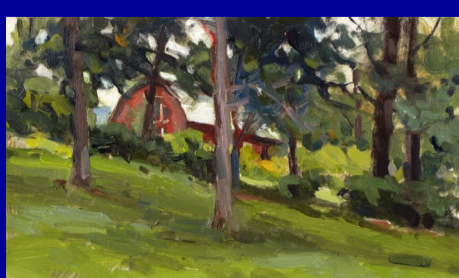
As I mentioned in another article here, T.C. Steele was a dominant figure of the early Brown County artists. His home, studio and grounds fell into disrepair over the years but are now a state historic site. The home site is now filled with trees, so those spectacular 15 mile vistas Steele so fondly spoke of are no longer visible.



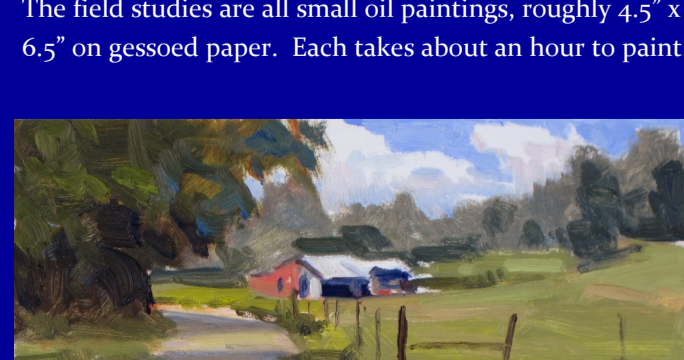
A tour of his studio, filled with paintings, revealed how his work changed over the years.

Here is my painting of his studio as it appears today.

While exploring the back roads of the area, I found this little farm scene near Morgantown, north of Nashville. We found a shady spot by the side of the road and while I painted, Marcia sat in the car reading her book.



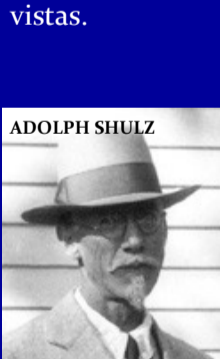
The field studies are all small oil paintings, roughly 4.5" x 6.5" on gessoed paper. Each takes about an hour to paint.



Brown County Artists Colony was largest, best known colony in the Midwest

By John Pototschnik
Edited by Judith Smith

Nashville, Indiana, in Brown County, about 40 miles south of Indianapolis, was first discovered by artists in the late 1800's. Here the artists discovered a tranquil area inhabited by fiercely independent folk who seemed to live 50 years behind the times. The roads were so poor they were more like footpaths. The dwellings bereft of modern conveniences such as indoor plumbing and electricity. Brown County appealed to the artists because of its rustic beauty and its sweeping soft purple hazed vistas.



Adolph Shulz was one such artist. He began painting in the Brown County area in early 1900. While Shulz is credited with the initial growth and subsequent vitality of the Colony, the move of Theodore Clement Steele to Nashville in 1907 served as a magnet for other accomplished artists of the time. T. C. Steele was most certainly the best known, most articulate, and most published artist of what became known as the "Hoosier Group."

This group evolved to become one of the leading groups of impressionistic landscape painters in America. Artists began arriving in Brown County in significant numbers around 1906 when the Illinois Central Railroad and the hospitable Pittman Inn came to the area. Many of those early arrivals were Chicago area artists who were looking to paint in a quaint setting. They wanted to escape from the industrialized overcrowded big city.

In addition to T. C. Steele, others instrumental in the formation of this colony of likeminded artists included: Will Vawter, Gustave Baumann, Adolph and Ada Shulz, Louis Griffith, and Dale Bessire. It was not unusual for a contingent of these artists to make the sojourn to Brown County each summer. By 1935, eighteen artists had established permanent residency there and supported themselves through their art.

The Brown County Art Colony began to decline in the late 1940's as the original generation of artists died out. For more than three decades the members of this colony resisted the artistic turmoil other colonies experienced. The division by the intellectual art connoisseurs who promoted innovation and by the art buyers and critics who preferred subjective emphasis was resisted here. Among those artists who created traditional representational art, the Brown County artists excelled. Today, this great tradition is carried forward through the inspired works of C.W. Mundy, John Michael Carter, David Slonim, and Todd Reifers, among others