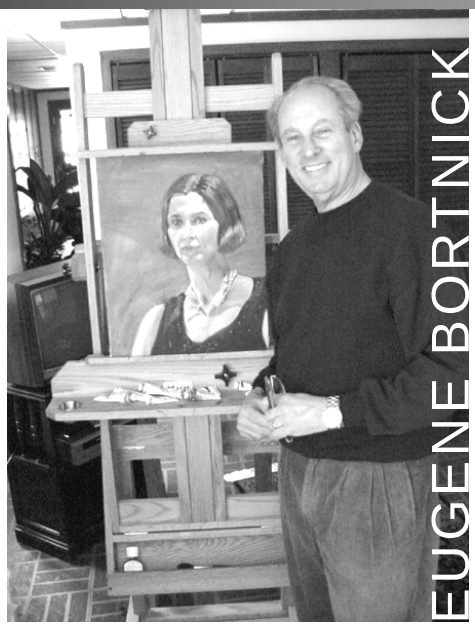
MEMBER PROFILE



Eugene Bortnick

I am essentially a water media artist who has been painting, drawing or sculpting since my very early childhood. Because I was raised during the Depression in the United States, my career was determined not by my wishes, but by those of my parents. I was to become a physician. Through my profession as a facial plastic surgeon however, I endeavored to promote and expand my artistic talent. I feel that my medical training has greatly improved my ability to perceive the anatomy, not only of the face, but also of the entire body.

I am therefore chiefly a self-taught artist, except for a brief course when I attended the Kansas City Art Institute. Through books and magazine articles I have derived much of my information. I studied the artists, whom I admired. I copied the master's techniques and attended workshops when time allowed. The most beneficial exercise has been my participation in a regular live model sketch class, which I attend twice weekly. We hire models, who pose for two hours. There is also another group of artists with whom I meet monthly to critique each other's work. I try to sketch every chance I get when I am not working: this means when I am waiting for my food in a restaurant, on a bus, on a train, or on vacation. It has been very useful for me to carry a sketchbook and a digital camera for my casual outings, as well as when I travel. My subject matter, therefore, is mainly figurative with my subjects actively engaged in everyday activities. I especially enjoy trying to capture the figure in motion or in an unposed, relaxed manner. Occasionally I will paint portraits on commission.

Most of my watercolor paintings are done using transparent colors, however at times I will use gouache in combination with transparent pigment. More recently I have been using Casein. My tube colors are mainly Holbein, M. Graham, and Winsor&Newton, as these are good quality products. I have tried small cake pigments, but find them too difficult to moisten.

I prefer painting on Strathmore plate finish paper or board. Sometimes, I will use a very rough, handmade paper called Nujabi. This paper cannot take too much scrubbing, but it has a wonderful rough texture that lends itself well to male portraits and seascapes.

The brushes that I use are of both natural and artificial bristles. I want them all to form a fine point or edge. It is difficult to order these brushes through the mail, as I prefer to test them with water in the store before I purchase them. I try to use the largest brush that will cover the area I am concentrating upon, and then I will gradually work down to smaller brushes, I use both flat and round in my studio paintings, but use only Number Six and Number Eight rounds in my travel set.

I am more interested in correct values than in the exact color reproduction. I try to get the value and hue on my first brushstroke rather than utilizing multiple glazes. I will do little mixing on my palette; rather try to apply the correct paint directly on the paper. I use a small piece of the identical paper with which I am working attached to the side of my painting to test the hue and value of each pigment. These concepts are not original with me, but techniques, which I have learned from reading and studying articles written by artists whom I admire.

I feel that it is important to exhibit actively and enter as many competitive exhibitions as time and budget permit. Although it is difficult to accept rejection, the advantages and benefits associated with maintaining an active membership with fellow artists is very rewarding to me. I am a member of several art societies: The Birmingham Watercolour Society (England), American Portrait Society, Missouri Watercolor Society, Signature Member of The Kansas Watercolor Society, *Signature Member of* The Louisiana Watercolor Society, and Signature Member of The National Watercolor Society. Some of these groups are very active in promoting and furthering the education of their members. I have given demonstrations and lectures within these groups and have found a reciprocal advantage in my participation.

I will always welcome fellow artists into my studio work area if they wish to observe or learn my techniques. It has always been a pleasure for me to teach and assist other artists if I am able. Most of all, it has been a life-long pleasure to create artworks, share art experiences with others, continue as a student of art, and to live my life with the hope and anticipation of what my next painting subject might be.

Editor's Note

The MEMBER PROFILE Column

If you would like to nominate someone or would like to be featured in the Member Profile column, please e-mail me, Helen Veatch, Brushstrokes Editor at: helen_veatch@pixius.net. Please include a biography in .doc format, a 200 dpi .tif portrait file and at least two paintings also 200 dpi .tif.