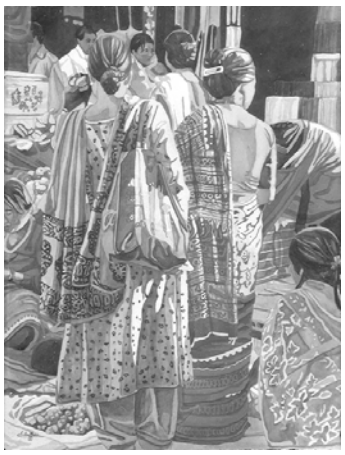
MEMBER PROFILE

Sandra Schaffer

Sandra Schaffer was born in Kansas City, Missouri. She earned a BA in Psychology from the University of Missouri, Columbia and an MA in Learning Disabilities. She currently uses those degrees on a part-time basis as a teacher and diagnostician at an alternative high school in Kansas City, MO. She finds teaching special populations of students to be both interesting and challenging. She has always found herself very interested in diversity, both as an artist and as a teacher.

Sandra began experimenting with watercolor in her 20's. She worked for several years designing stained glass windows and experimenting in oil painting, but found herself drawn back to watercolor, enjoying the properties it afforded for transparency and luminosity. She began painting seriously in the mid-90's and entered her first juried show, the Kansas Watercolor Society 7 State Exhibition in 1997. Since that time she has had the honor of having work chosen to appear in 122 regional, national and international shows and has won numerous awards. She is currently a signature member of 17 state and regional watercolor societies including Watercolor Honor Society, Kansas Watercolor Society, Northwest Watercolor Society, and Watercolor West among others. She has had several one-person shows including a show at the Birger-Sandzen Gallery in 2005.

Not coincidentally, it was during the mid-90's that Sandra began traveling, mainly to countries such as Indonesia, Nepal and Peru where she has taken much of her inspiration. Her travels have been in small groups that have taken her close to the culture. In Indonesia she stayed in a Hindu Ashram, in Nepal she climbed in a small group with Sherpas and porters into high country only accessible by foot or donkey. Carrying her large "often less than portable" 35 mm camera with her everywhere she went, she came back with a multitude of photographs of rarely seen areas of the world. Her goal has been to incorporate "cultural anthropology" with painting, trying to translate the beautiful colors, textures and forms she has found in these places into works of art. She is drawn to subjects that are "close to earth", that display the dignity and beauty of less Westernized cultures.



In technique Sandra's work tends to be very detailed, with an emphasis on brilliant color. The challenge for her has always been to find combinations of clean color glazes that create the most vibrant effects. The most important technical aspects of a work to her are dimension, depth and intensity. Not all of her work is culturally based. Other subjects interesting to her are unusual ways of looking at familiar objects. Her paintings begin with a detailed drawing based on photos she has taken. She does not use value studies or sketches, but instead builds on the painting as she goes, making decisions as she proceeds. She rarely takes workshops or classes, but instead learns by trial and error. However, much of her "trial and error glazing " is tested on a spare piece of watercolor paper; she would rarely risk ruining a work in progress.

Sandra is currently Newsletter Editor for Watercolor Honor Society Newsletter, and often finds herself in the position of writing about other artists' lives. She finds this extremely interesting and rewarding. Additional interests include bicycling and reading. She is married and has a grown son and daughter.

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