

Southwest Art

Fine Art of Today's West

EAST COAST ARTISTS

Richard Schmid
& the Putney Painters

Michael Godfrey
Paints the Landscape

plus

**Quang Ho Illustrates
a Children's Book**

**American Art Invitational
Returns to Denver**

DECEMBER 2010

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LOOKING EAST

This month we cast our spotlight on artists who live and work on the East Coast. But even though they are based elsewhere, they are familiar names for many of us here in the West. Landscape painter **Michael Godfrey**, who is this month's cover artist, calls Maryland home, but he frequently paints the landscape of the West and is a regular participant in the annual Western Visions Miniatures and More Show & Sale at the National Museum of Wildlife Art

in Jackson Hole, WY. This month Godfrey is also participating in the American Art Invitational at Saks Galleries in Denver, CO.

Michael Dudash, who hails from Pennsylvania, is captivated by scenes of the Old West. And **West Fraser**, based in South Carolina, is a signature member of the Plein-Air Painters of America. Nationally known oil painters **Richard Schmid** and **Nancy Guzik**, who now live in New Hampshire, hardly need introduction. The couple lived and painted in Colorado for a number of years before moving to New England, where they founded the **Putney Painters**, a unique cadre of artists who gather regularly in the picturesque town of Putney, VT. Passionate about painting, they are fond of calling themselves an "artistic family."

We're pleased to bring you a closer look at these East Coast artists—for talent is never limited by geographic boundaries.



NEW SNOW BY MICHAEL GODFREY





KING STREET'S HAPPENING BY WEST FRASER

San Francisco, California, 1995. Oil on canvas. 100 x 100 inches. West Fraser Collection.

San Francisco, California, 1995. Oil on canvas. 100 x 100 inches. West Fraser Collection.

San Francisco, California, 1995. Oil on canvas. 100 x 100 inches. West Fraser Collection.



PAINTING ON BROAD, OIL, 36 X 36.▲
MARTIN HOUSES, OIL, 30 X 40.►



Portraits *of* Places

West Fraser paints the scenery that he has always loved

BY MARK MUSSARI

THERE WAS no movie theater on Hilton Head Island when West Fraser was a teenager, and maybe that was a good thing. Whereas most teens would have been bored, Fraser was fascinated by the scenery that surrounded him, and he has spent a lifetime recreating it on canvas. Known for his evocative paintings of coastal landscapes and small towns, the Southern painter continues to capture the vistas that defined his formative years.

Born in Savannah, GA, Fraser spent his early childhood in nearby Hinesville. "My paternal grandmother had a lot of art around the house," he recalls, "and she would provide paper, pencils, and crayons for me when I was a child." Unlike many

professional painters, Fraser was not bitten by the art bug early in life. "I was mostly just playing in the woods, hunting and fishing," he says. "I grew up on horseback, on a small farm. It was idyllic."

His family moved to Hilton Head when Fraser was 11, and the nature-loving youth was floored by the beauty of his new surroundings. "The Sea Islands were quite spectacular," he observes. "It's some of the most unique scenery in the world, a huge estuary and breeding grounds for marine life. It looks like a jungle." As time went on, however, Fraser watched civilization and development encroaching slowly on his beloved views. "That change had a profound effect on me, to see the place where



DOSSIER REPRESENTATION

Helena Fox Fine Art, Charleston, SC; Palmetto Bluff Gallery, Bluffton, SC; Irene Morrah Fine Art, Greenville, SC; Claudia Heath Fine Art, Charlotte, NC; Clark Gallery, Banner Elk, NC; James J. Rieser Fine Art, Carmel, CA; www.westfraserstudio.com.

UPCOMING SHOW

Solo show, Spartanburg Art Museum, Spartanburg, SC, early 2011.



▲ BIRD COUNT, OIL, 50 X 68.

SUPPORT AMERICAN
FISHERMEN, OIL, 30 X 36. ►

**“Light is really
the only subject
I paint.”**

I once had a tree fort turning into a condominium project,” he explains. “I was very attached to the land—and I still am.”

At the age of 13, Fraser began to make watercolor sketches, and throughout his teen years he became increasingly aware of environmental issues. Today he puts it this way: “My interest in biology merged with my natural inclination to make images,” he says. By the time he turned 14, his artistic talent had become clear to his family. Fate intervened when accomplished illustrator Coby Whitmore moved to Hilton Head. “His son was a friend of mine,” remembers Fraser. “My mother showed Coby a watercolor I did and asked him if he thought I needed lessons. But he advised against it.” Instead, Whitmore told her to buy the teenager any materials he wanted and to “let him find his own way.” Fraser’s mother followed the advice.

After high school, Fraser attended the University of Georgia, graduating with a bachelor’s of fine art in illustration and graphic design. He had avoided taking any fine-art classes, however, because he did not like the thrust of the department, which he defines in retrospect as “do whatever you want.” Fraser wanted

a more disciplined foundation. Following graduation he took jobs in illustration while continuing to paint on the side.

Early influences on Fraser’s art included Winslow Homer, Georgia O’Keeffe, and especially N.C. and Andrew Wyeth. “I loved the illustrators and the amazing way they could craft an image,” he notes. The luminosity inherent in the early 20th-century illustrations of artists like N.C. Wyeth and Howard Pyle would later become an essential element in Fraser’s own paintings.

At first, Fraser painted almost solely in watercolors. “But by 1989 I was getting tired of watercolors,” he observes. “I was out taking photographs and then working at my easel in the studio. I started thinking that there had to be a better way.” He also realized that painting with watercolors on location was burdensome. “It was too humid, and often the paper wouldn’t dry. Sometimes I would hold it over a fire to dry it out! By 1990, I realized that oil was a better medium for me, and I really started painting exclusively outdoors.” The marshes, forests, and coastlines—the glorious scenes that had surrounded him in his youth—were calling out to him.

“TODAY, I call myself a painter, not a plein-air painter,” says Fraser, who now lives in Charleston, SC. “My art is naturalistic, although my use of color might take me out of the naturalist realm. On that front I’m more of an American impressionist,” he explains, nodding to the approach of the Old Lyme and California schools. “I don’t try to copy nature’s colors. I try to create imagery that triggers a response.”

Asked to define his process, he says that “composition comes first. The elements have to be there.” Unlike some plein-air painters, Fraser does not change the scenery to create his compositions. “I don’t take a tree and move it somewhere else,” he points out. “I compose from the elements I have in front of me. My perspective is as if you’re walking into that space.” And what spaces he captures: Viewers might find themselves staring at a distant sailboat on the glittering water, watching the sunset from a deserted cove, or wading deep into marshland bathed in golden afternoon light. “I almost always employ a foreground that leads you into the picture,”