



Iowa ARTISTS

August 2012, Vol. 41, #3

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New Members List

The last time I was here, I made mention of **Esther Cheng's** show at the Hearst Center for the Arts in Cedar Falls. If you haven't already gone to see it, I urge you to do so. The show will run through August 9.

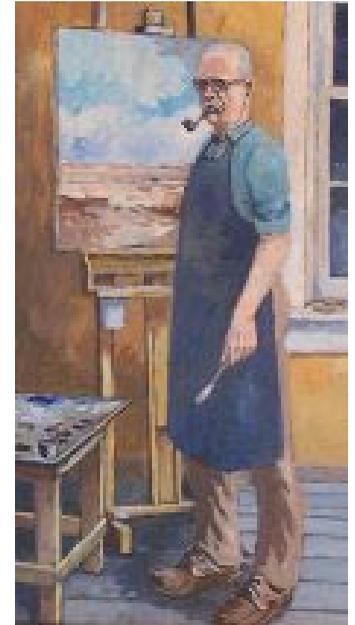
I owe an apology to Sharon Granzow. Sharon was nominated and elected as a director at the spring meeting in Calmar. Her nomination was a mistake on my part. Sharon had told me, and I had forgotten, that she had said that she was up to her ears with Iowa Watercolor Society and could not serve as a director this time around. So, Sharon is off the hook with my thanks for all she has done and all that she will do for Iowa Artists. This means we are hunting for a fourth director. If anyone out there has an interest, please get a hold of me or one of the other officers or board members before the board meeting in September.

We are also short a vice president. We really only need one to continue our past practice of the vice president assuming the presidency when the current president's term expires or the president abdicates for some other reason. Filling this post does not become critical until next year's state show (May 2013),

however I would like to have someone lined up now to be appointed until May and then be legitimately elected for the balance of the 2012-2014 term. Please give this serious consideration and contact me with your interest in taking that position.

The fall 2012 board meeting will be held in September, probably by telephone. If any of you have matters you wish to bring before the board or if you want to actually speak to the board at the meeting, please contact me and I will make the arrangements.

I had all sorts of ambitions about doing outdoor painting this summer. The heat, however, has kept me in my own little air-conditioned school house studio and my plans, like "the best laid schemes o' mice an' men, gang aft agley". I hope you have done better.



Jim Updegraff

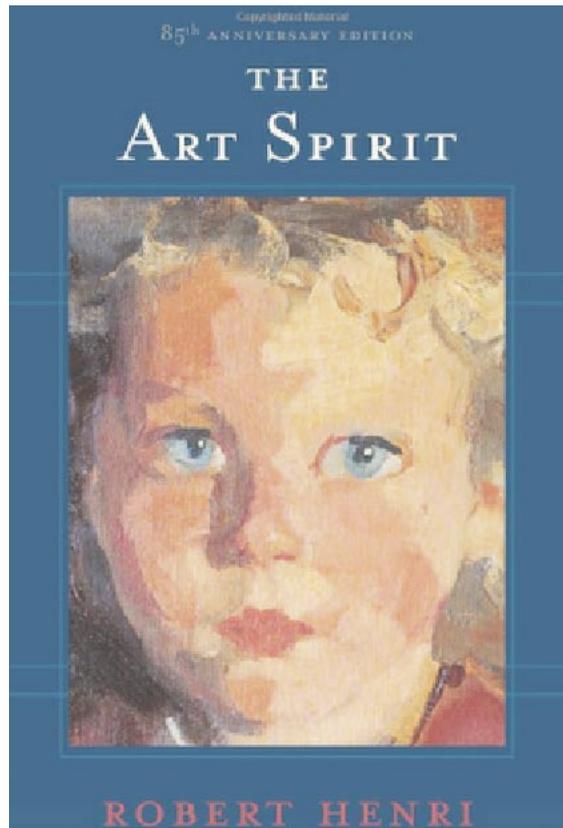
The Joy of Creating

by Helen Logan

I very highly recommend the book, **The Art Spirit**, first published in 1923, to all you accomplished and “would-be” artists. The author, Robert Henri, was an early 20th Century instructor at the Art Students League in New York City, an inspired teacher, with an extraordinary gift for verbal communication. His life of uncontaminated devotion to art transformed students into idolaters. We can learn much by a continued study of *The Art Spirit* which embodies the entire system of Henri’s teaching and contains much of his philosophy of the “art spirit” of all humanity.

Henri did not concur with the belief that art is restricted to those who paint, sculpt, make music, or verse. His contention was that the material used is only incidental, that there is “artist” in every human being to whom the possibility of development and expression – the happiness of creation – is as much a right and a duty as to anyone who works in an especially prescribed way. Henri considered the “object” to be intense living, fulfillment, and the great happiness in creation. He said, “It is only in creative work that joy may be found, whether he be a carpenter or a fisherman!”

“A man possessed of an idea, working like fury to hold his grip on it and to fix it on canvas may not stop to see just how he is doing the work; nor may he consider what might be



“the world will always need inventors”.

an outsider’s opinion of it. He must hold his grip on the meaning he has caught from nature, and he cannot grope for ways of expression. His need is immediate. The idea is fleeting. He must have technique – but he can now use only what he actually knows. At other times he has studied technique, tried this and that, experimented, and hunted for the right phrase. But now he is not in the hour of research. He is in the hour of expression. The only thing he has in mind is the idea. As to the elegance of his expression,

he cannot think of it. It is the idea, and the idea alone which possesses him, and because it must be expressed, because he has need to express it, he makes a great draft on his memory, on all his store of knowledge and past experience, and all these he regulates into service.

“If later we find that there was elegance in his expression, that there was brilliant technique, still he was not aware of it at the time of its accomplishment. It is only the sign of the success of his effort to recapture all his knowledge and make it work for him at a time of great need. He was not conscious of his gracefulness, for it was only a result of the high state of order to which he had raised himself.” (*The Art Spirit*, Basic Books Edition 2007, pp. 227-8.)

Robert Henri was looking for “self-expression” in his students. One important lesson, to me, was his emphasis on individuality, the freedom of expression, that “the world will always need inventors”. Don’t copy someone else’s work that pleases you – decide why you like it, then add that impression to your creative storehouse.

We want to learn formula and technique, how colors react to each other, but when we begin to paint, we need to think about what we really like, then paint to express that image and keep working until it satisfies – not the judge, or the one working next to you, but you!

Beetles, Dragons & the Making of Red

By Mary Lou Wright

In Chapter 4 of *Color: A Natural History of the Palette*, author Victoria Finley tells about the origins of several hues of red using paintings by the well known 1800s British painter Joseph Mallord William Turner for the theme. Her quest for information on the history of various reds revealed stories of intrigue.

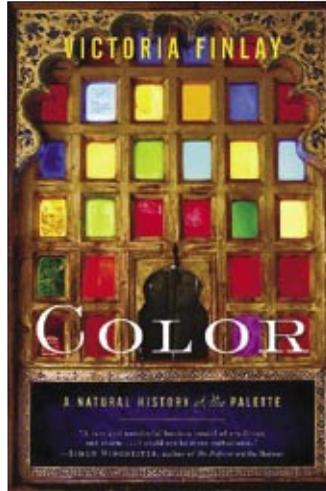
One of the stories involved the Indians of Mexico and Central America who used the blood of the cochineal beetle for their beautiful reds and guarded the secret closely. Europe wanted to know what this wonderful color was and how to produce it. There were many attempts to get the insect including that of Thierry de Menonville who, with the blessings of France, went to Mexico to smuggle some

cochineal.

Another story is of Cornelious Drebbel's accidental discovery of a bright red hue.

Then there were the efforts of Dr. James Anderson in the 1780s to import and cultivate the cochineal in India. Pliny tells the story that the origin of cinnabar, or vermillion, was the result of a struggle between an elephant and a dragon. These are just a few of the stories and history found in this chapter. You just can't stop reading. Enjoy.

(Mary Lou has consented to provide short synopsis for the newsletter about some of the colors found on an artist's palette. Watch for them in future issues. Which color will be next?)



New Newsletter Co-Editor

IA Newsletter has a new co-editor with the current issue. Iowa Artists past president, Marvella Blome, a talented painter and graphic artist, has taken over Esther Cheng's position on the newsletter

and the IA board. I am pleased to be able to work with her. Together we will continue to build the content and visual look of the newsletter. As always, reader suggestions and input are welcome. T. Moschel

Paint 'Til You Faint Women's Retreat

"We still have openings available for Paint 'Til You Paint,

**October 16th thru 19th
at Pine Lake, Eldora.**

If you have projects you would like to finish or need time to develop new ideas, this might be the perfect setting for you. Consider joining us."

To Register Contact: **Joanie Kerns**, Coordinator
1401 Oakcrest Dr. Waterloo, Iowa 50701
PH: 319-233-0470 Email: jlkkerns@yahoo.com

Iowa Artists Website

Check it out - www.iowaartists.us

Read the IA Newsletter in color as posted on the website. Free link for Iowa Artists members:

In the Iowa Artists website there is a category titled "Membership Art". If you have already created a website for your own art you can link your website to the organization's site. That way anyone who looks at the IA website can see your link and directly access your art. All you have to do is provide IA Webmaster Mark Wilson with the following:

1. Your Name (first and last)
2. The link to your website (example www.pvspartans.com)
3. Email #1 & 2 to Mark Wilson at mwilsonfamily@mchsi.com

Esther Cheng

Interview

by Patricia Robb

Iowa Artists member Esther Cheng says her parents always considered themselves fortunate they did not have to escape while clinging to the tops of train cars like so many others. It was 1949 and Esther's father was in charge of medical equipment acquisition for the Chinese government's medical academy and its hospital. Esther was then 3 years old; the Communists overthrew the Nationalist government and the medical academy decided to relocate to Taiwan, a small island off the southeast coast of China. They brought in ships, moving the whole academy with all its students, staff and their families, in safety and ease. Many others, including Esther's future husband, fled China with people holding onto the tops of already packed train cars.

Esther Cheng is the subject of a farewell solo exhibit at the Hearst Center for the Arts in Cedar Falls, where we can view sixty-five of her beautiful paintings with their radiant colors and intriguing compositions, through August 9, 2012. Working in a studio in a part of her living room,



she usually starts these complex and colorful paintings with ordinary photographs, but always paints in beauty and vibrancy that weren't in the original photos. Esther prefers Arches watercolor paper, and uses Winsor & Newton watercolor paints for their ability to not crumble when dry on the palette. She also likes Holbein watercolor paints because their colors are bright. Esther's palette usually contains cadmium yellow, cadmium red, permanent rose, manganese blue, cobalt blue, ultramarine blue, prussian blue, and burnt sienna. Other colors are sometimes added depending on what she is painting. Brushes have specific traits and Esther has found that syn-

thetic brushes hold a point longer but are stiffer to use. She feels that natural fiber brushes are nicer to paint with but they lose their point faster, so she usually uses synthetic. All of her supplies she buys from mail order companies like Cheap Joe's or ASW. Esther used to be able to work on her art every day when her son was younger and in school. Unfortunately, however, fibromyalgia has now brought aching and less energy, so she finds time to work about 2 to 3 days a week for 3 hours tops. If she is awakened at night with pain, she will get up and work on her art. In a while the pain will be gone, and she can slip back to sleep!

Esther Cheng was named Liu Lee Chuan when she was born in 1946 in west/central mainland China. Liu was her last name, as last names are positioned first in Chinese. Growing up in Taipei, the capital city of Taiwan, she always liked art and remembers even then she preferred the look of watercolor painting over oil. While growing up in Taiwan she had no formal art training but would often entertain herself by drawing portraits of the

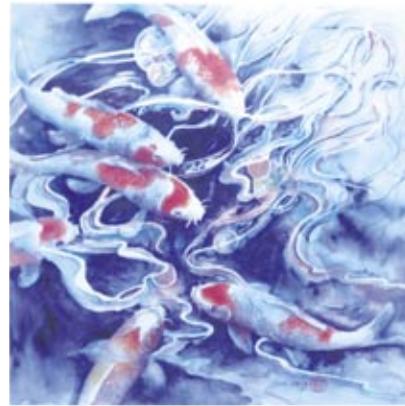


western movie stars like Elizabeth Taylor, Audrey Hepburn, and Natalie Wood. In college in Taiwan Esther majored in Chinese literature and also met her husband, Paul. After college, they married in the Episcopal Church which was Paul's family's religion. The Episcopal pastor gave English confirmation names to Esther and Paul, and they later chose to use those names as their first names in the U.S. After their marriage, Paul received a scholarship in engineering to Illinois State University in Bloomington, and then went to Northern Illinois University in DeKalb for his doctorate. Happily for Iowa, Paul then got a job at John Deere in Waterloo, so the family moved to the Waterloo/Cedar Falls area. They had a 2 year old son then, and Esther was writing Chinese language articles about life in the U.S. for the paper back in Taiwan. In 1987 Esther saw a watercolor class offered at Cedar Falls Recreation & Arts Center once housed in no longer existing Main Street School and thought she would try it. (The art center portion later moved to today's Hearst Center for the Arts on Seerley Boulevard). The teacher of that class was Doris Frandsen (the Iowa Artists' Doris Frandsen Award is named for her), who was an acclaimed area artist. Doris invited all of her students to join her in an active group of artists meeting every Wednesday morning in Doris' home (until relocating to the new Hearst Center for the Arts), and Esther received lots of encouragement from Doris and this group of artists. The group also went with Doris to as many workshops and classes as possible, all piling into her famed station wagon. Happily, no one had to hang onto the top of this car to get there!

Esther and the watercolor group always attended the yearly Iowa Watercolor Society's workshops taught by well-known artists. She still considers IWS membership very valuable and is a Signature Member of IWS. Esther feels she learned a great deal from Duluth, Minnesota artist Cheng-Khee Chee, and from John Salminen also of Duluth. She appreciates Pennsylvania artist Frank Webb's teaching, and Wendell Mohr's. Doris Frandsen was a friend of artist Wendell Mohr, who lived upstairs in a church in Keosauqua, and conducted watercolor workshops downstairs. To further broaden her artistic expertise, Esther enrolled in the art department at the University of Northern Iowa 2004 – 06 and later taught Graphic Design as an adjunct in that department. A member of Iowa Artists, Esther has served for eight years as IA Newsletter Co-Editor. It is her skill as a graphic artist that has given this publication its visual look.

Esther's husband's parents maintain the old Chinese traditions,

and so, following tradition, their eldest son Paul was expected to take care of them in their old age. They moved in with Esther and Paul several years ago, but left Iowa rather disappointed. It was too quiet they felt! Of course the cold winters



and lack of other Chinese-speaking people didn't help either. Paul's parents are now happily living in a Chinese (perhaps less quiet) retirement community in Sacramento, California, and Esther and Paul are moving there

to help care for them. But Esther and Paul's son, his wife and their 2 year old daughter remain in Cedar Rapids, so there are good reasons for return visits to Iowa. Esther and Paul have been in Iowa for over 30 years, and will be greatly missed. Her gentle, creative and informed teaching brought many budding artists to watercolor. Esther Cheng is an award-winning watercolorist, signature Iowa Watercolor Society member and didn't take an art class until she was 41 years old. So there is hope for all of us late bloomers!



Artists are Readers, too

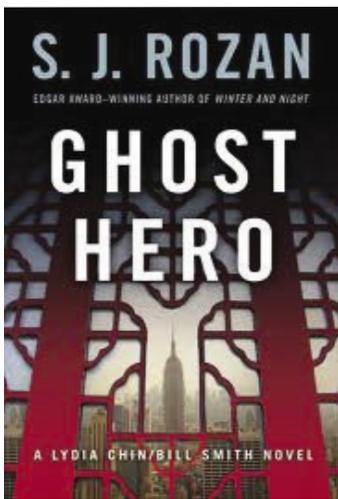
By Twyla Moschel

The Art Spirit

by Robert Henry-Published 1923

Recommended by Helen Logan, Cedar Falls, this book is every bit the inspirational good read that she proclaims.

The Art Spirit is filled with the “best of the collected words, teachings, and letters of inspired artist and teacher Robert Henri”. Like all classic work it is timeless,” filled with valuable technical advice as well as wisdom about the place of art and the artist in American society”. In testimony of her appreciation of this book, Helen has written an essay titled ‘The Joy of Creating’ published on page 2 of this issue.

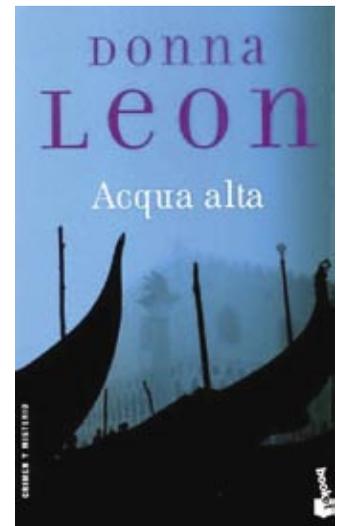


Ghost Hero by S. J. Rozen-Published 2011

Ann Olsson, Waterloo, recommends this recent addition to the Lydia Chin/Bill Smith series by Rozen. Ann tells us that “Ghost Hero is a “mild” mystery novel; it has no bloodshed. It does have an engaging protagonist in Lydia Chin, a very modern young Chinese American private investigator and her partner Bill Smith. They take on a case to track down a rumor of previously unknown paintings by Chau Chun, “Ghost Hero Chau”, who is very hot in contemporary Chinese art. However, Chun has been dead for 20 years, her client is not who he says he is and there is another Chinese American PI looking into the case for another client. This book combines the contemporary Chinese art world, Tiananmen Square and Chinese dissidents, and missing paintings. It is entertaining and a very easy read.”

Acqua Alta by Donna Leon– Published 1996

If you have ever wondered what it is like to be a citizen of Venice going about your daily business in the city of canals during a rainy season you will get a good feel for it through the words of the author. In Aqua Alta, Commissario Guido Brunetti, the detective in a mystery series by Leon, investigates a case involving an American archeologist working in China, a powerful shady museum director in Venice, an Italian opera singing diva, gallery owners who deal in valuable antiquities sought by private collectors and museums, and a ring of creators and purveyors of exceptionally good fakes. Along the way the reader gains insight into the minute tell-tale clues utilized by specialists in determining the real thing from the ingenious reproductive art meant to replace it.



Color: A Natural History of the Palette

by Victoria Finlay-Published 2002 This comes to you as a suggestion by Mary Lou Wright, Ames.

In her note she writes, “I am on my third reading. She (Finlay) has traveled many places to find the history of each color. Her stories of her travels are very well written. It is not a book that can be easily put aside.” So I bought a copy and have traveled the world with Finlay through mines and caves, across the Outback, into the Amazon, hither and yon in the search of the origins of color, its commerce, its use and meaning across cultures. We have it so easy with our art stores, catalogs, advanced chemistry and modern techniques. Read the piece titled ‘Beetles, Dragons and the Making of Red’ on page 3 in this issue written by Mary Lou.

New and Renewed IA Members

(Rec'd. after Feb. 2012 Printing of IA Membership Dir.)

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Iowa Artists Membership Form

Membership/renewal Fee: \$25

Due day: December 31, each year

Please Print

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

County: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Cell#: _____

New: _____ Renewal: _____ Region#: _____

Change of address

Please cut out and mail to the Treasure

Pay to: **Iowa Artists**

Marcia Kruse

2601 Lafayette Ridge Drive, Lansing, IA 52151

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