

The GCAA Presents:

THE PAINTBRUSH BLOG

THIS MONTH AT GUELPH CREATIVE ARTS ASSOCIATION

by Gillian Joseph



Rockwood pastel artist **John Root** followed several interesting paths before he found his way to the easel. Born in Stratford, Ontario, John started a career in theatre as a lad in Stratford and sang and performed on stage alongside well-known actors including Christopher Plummer and Bill Hutt. After some time, he then worked his way up to become the Director of Exhibits there, in charge of not one, but two exhibit halls. John also worked for the National Theatre of Montreal summer school program in Stratford where he was able to share his knowledge of stage lighting which had, by then, become his area of expertise.



Eventually making his way to Guelph to teach English and History, John ended up in Rockwood where he was able to switch to teaching his favourite topics, math and drama. Rockwood, and particularly the beautiful location of his house on the Eramosa River, is where he happily resides today. Although teaching was a joy for him, a serendipitous trip to his local mall one day got him hooked on the jewelry

business, where he worked for 17 years - not only selling jewelry but also designing pieces as well.

Incorporating the skills he learned in both the jewelry business and in teaching stage lighting, John paints with acrylics and soft pastels and he is particularly known for his use of light. Having taken courses over time with Guelph's own Jessica Masters and American pastel artists Lana Ballot, Nancy King Mertz and Peter Fiore, John labels his style as "naturalism" using realism that is not photographic, but more how the eye and brain actually perceive the world. By bringing the viewer in to the main focal point of the picture, John tends to paint the outer edges softer and less distinct, just as they are in peripheral vision. "I tend to be more obsessive than I should be, though" he says. "I'm a detail guy. It's just me".



Not surprisingly, John comes from a very creative family. John's mother was a concert pianist and vocalist who graduated from McMaster University and did postgraduate studies in Europe at London and Paris. His sister in Massachusetts was also a concert pianist, while his younger sister has just taken up painting and an older sister is an accomplished quilter. John's wife, Gail, is also an accomplished artist.

His advice for new artists? "Pay close attention to composition and lighting" he says. "Composition is so important... you need to get it right. I'm known for my sense of light in my painting – from my National Theatre of Montreal experience I think". He also encourages artists who are starting out to consider exhibiting their work locally. "Just walk in and start talking" he says about obtaining permission to exhibit work in public, emphasizing that he keeps a copy of his portfolio on his phone, tablet and in print to show people when the opportunity presents itself. John also organizes his own shows locally, which provides him with opportunities to not only showcase but also to sell his work. Because he focuses on landscape painting, and often paints scenes that can be found in the Rockwood area, John's paintings are collected locally as well as across Canada and abroad. Recently, the Wellington County Museum and

Archives acquired four of John's paintings to add to their permanent collection, and in 2019 his work was profiled in the New Zealand Artists Magazine.

What about the future for John Root I ask him? "Well," he said, "I haven't got my head around the future yet", and I know what he means. Let's hope that COVID, and its impact on artists, ends soon. Until then, John will continue to retreat to the quiet meditation of his furnace room studio... and to the brushes and pastels that serve him so well.

You can view more of John's work on his webpage <https://artofjohnaroot.ca> or on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/john.root.77770194>.

