

A MARINE PERSPECTIVE

*The SouthCoast provides Mattapoissett artist,
Mike Mazer, with endless subjects to paint*

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EXCLUSIVE TO HOMEGALLERY





When Mike Mazer heads out his Mattapoissett front door in search of something to paint, he never worries that he'll have trouble finding that perfect image.

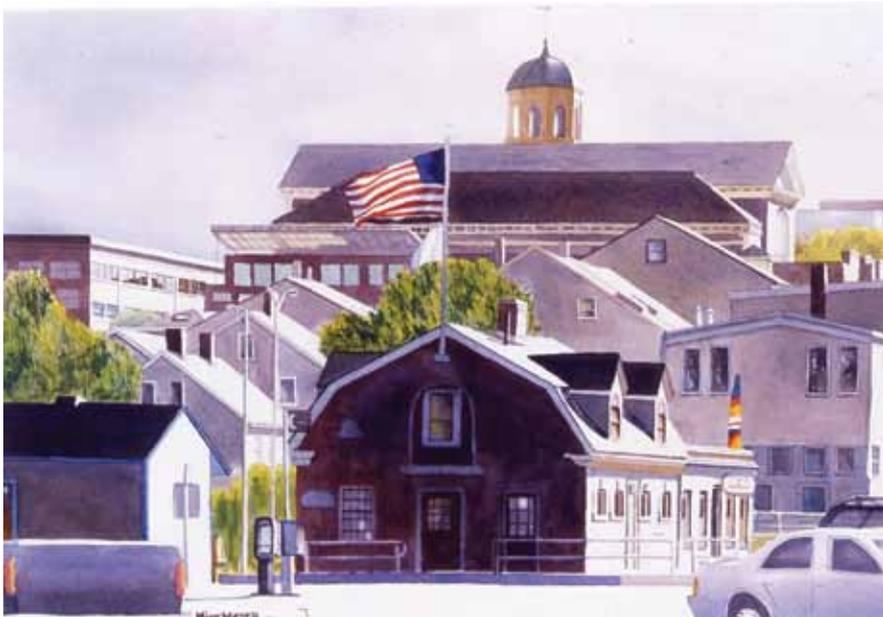
The marine artist paints all kinds of boats and coastal scenes from dinghies, to skiffs, to lobster boats, trawlers, and even tall ships. His paintings of the coves and harbors of Marion, Mattapoissett, Nantucket and other area ports hang in public and private collections throughout the U.S. including the Coast Guard building in Washington D.C., and the Public Library in New Bedford.

"Living on the coast in the SouthCoast is just superb," the artist said recently, speaking from his second home in Florida. "There's so many unbelievably great coves, marinas, and lots of commercial fishing activity."

For Mike, choosing a subject to paint is all about his emotional reaction to a scene. If he responds to what he sees, he'll paint it.

"You get emotionally excited and say that looks great. I want to paint it," he explained.

Luckily for SouthCoast residents, Mike finds the coastline between Cape Cod and Rhode Island particularly exciting.



Above: Visitors Center, Fisherman's Wharf

Below: Whaleman Statue, New Bedford



“People ask me how do you paint so many different paintings, don’t you run out of subject matter?” he said. How could he, in this scenic environment is Mike’s response.

“Around each and every bend there’s another cove. It’s just endless subject matter. It’s tremendous,” he said.

The 71-year-old retired cardiologist has an impressive artistic resume including more than 10 pages of shows and exhibitions he’s participated in and awards he’s won. He is currently focused on creating 30 new paintings for an upcoming solo show at the Cape Museum of Fine Arts scheduled for March of 2009.

Mike has been drawing and painting since he was a young child, taking to art as a way to spend his time when he wasn’t tending to several hundred chickens .

“There weren’t many other kids my age so I didn’t have much to do except chores,” he explained. “I raised 300 to 500 chickens and that was a pain. When I got through taking the eggs to neighbors, I’d be drawing or sketching whatever I saw in the woods.

After pursuing medicine, a field he loved for 36 years, he reclaimed his brushes in 1993 about five years before retiring as chief of cardiology and nephrology at greater Boston hospitals.

His paintings are mostly marine watercolors although he has also painted landscapes, and people and occasionally paints with oils.

“When I look at a scene, it’s not the specific objects I’m trying to paint. It’s how light affects the objects and creates light and shadow which in turn form the three-dimensional shape,” he said.

For example, one area of interest is the commercial fishing world, but if he picks a trawler to paint, Mike said, it’s not really about the trawler itself.

“If I’m painting the trawler, I’m not interested in painting the portrait of the boat, but I’m interested in the angle and the view,” he said.

Once he’s identified the scene he wants, Mike rearranges it, favoring compositions limited to three or four interesting shapes. “I take objects which are making, with the light and shadow, a certain shape and I try to take three to four shapes that make a good design and limit it to that,” he explained.

For the viewer, one of the emotional qualities radiating from Mike’s canvases is a sense of serenity. The quality is so strong in some images, it’s palpable.

Although he’s heard that many times, Mike said, he doesn’t consciously attempt to infuse his



Above: Trawler

paintings with a particular emotion. But he wonders if subconsciously the result isn't a reaction to his days of providing care to critically ill people in life-threatening environments.

"Being in critical care in medicine, taking care of critically ill people, that's not exactly serene. So that may be an escape, a way to unwind," he said. "I guess painting serene scenes was trying to make hospital scenes serene by getting them better."

Getting better is a prevalent theme for Mike in his work; although, unlike hospitals, where getting better means becoming well, Mike wants to see his work get continually better.

The gradual progression is always moving closer to that perfect image he envisions when starting a new work.

"Your mind creates a wonderful image but your hands don't necessarily carry it out," he explained, noting that the experience, although in one sense always short of its goal, is not a frustrating one.

"You just keep trying without actually having a specific way of trying. You're sort of evolving in a way that's probably unconscious. When you get through painting, you look at it and say to yourself that's nice," he said.

Surprisingly, Mike isn't particularly interested in selling his work, instead preferring to show it in national and international competitions.

"I'm more interested in competing on a national or international scale. I have most of my paintings spread throughout the country in different museums and different galleries," he said, adding that this allows him to "see how my work compares to others."

Ironically then, he is selling well.

He is represented locally by Roger's Gallery in Mattapoisett, and China Trader's Antiques in Marion and his paintings can be viewed at www.mikemazer.com

Although Mike has long since surpassed his goal of painting well enough to get into shows, the feedback still helps him place his works within a larger context.

"I've been in probably 300 national

shows, so at this point it's just to convince myself," he said.

One of the interesting things about Mike's coastal scenes is that no matter how many times he's painted water, the colors used can be vastly different. That's because, Mike said, the color is not what's important to him.

He often challenges himself, he said, by beginning a painting by laying down a color for the water, or sometimes the sky, an act that commits the rest of the painting to that shade.

"The colors aren't what I'm seeing. I'll actually challenge myself when I start to paint rather than figure out the exact color that's in the scene, I'll arbitrarily, on a subconscious intuitive level, I'll make a color," he said. "It restricts you then in order to make everything else work."

The process adds to the excitement of the process.

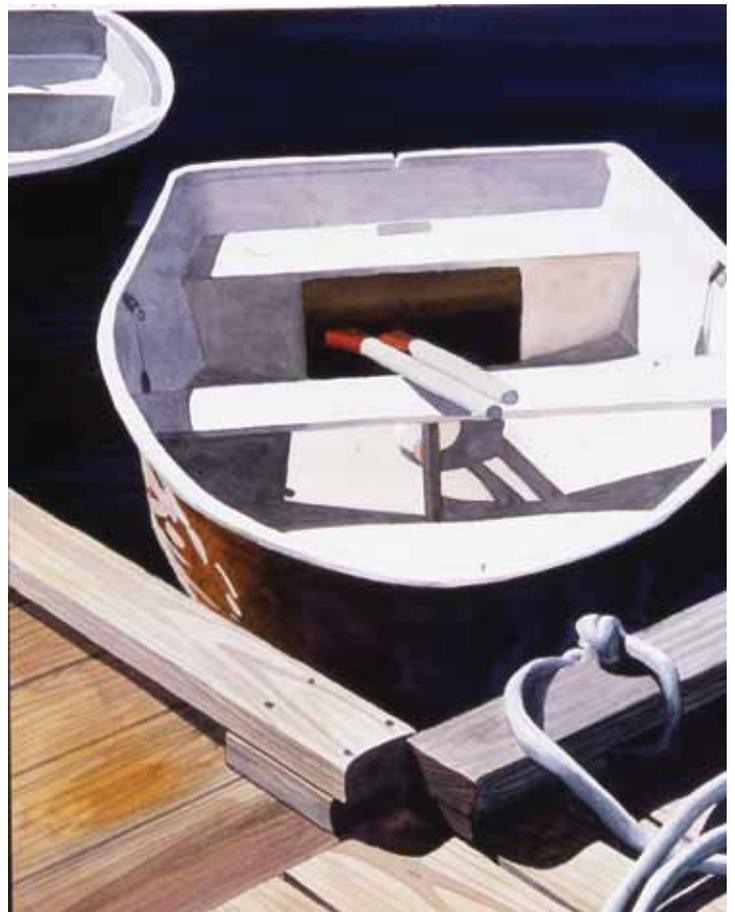
"You don't know how it's going to come out or evolve until it's much further along so you're sort of in an apprehensive state not knowing if it's going to work," he said.





Mike's recent accomplishments include having a painting selected for the 2006 Splash 9 Best in Watercolors and two more for the upcoming 2008 Splash 10. He also received three Special Recognition Merit Awards in the "10th Annual Realism Juried Online International Art Exhibition" hosted by Upstream People Gallery, had his work of the Bouchard Oil Spill selected to hang in the U.S. Coast Guard building in Washington, D.C. and had a painting of the Whaling Museum in New Bedford recognized in the 2007 Paint the Parks Competition, sponsored by PaintAmerica.

But his most prized painting? Without hesitation, he responded, "The next one."§



Left: Cove to Bay

Above: Morning Mist

Right: At the Crossroads