



PSWC *magazine*

PASTELS USA 2019

All the award winners and accepted entries at our biggest show now at the Haggin Museum.

THE INTERVIEW

Artist Alain Picard on his own art history--spoiler alert, he wanted to be in the MLB!

MEET THE MEMBERS

Two of our new Signature artists, Jean Choi and Susan Kuznitsky share their stories.

ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCY

Bonnie Griffith shares her experience as the Artist -in-Residency.

WORK IN PROGRESS

See what's on the easels of some of our favorite members.

P A S T E L S O C I E T Y O F T H E W E S T C O A S T

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Beautiful by Alain Picard

Alain Picard

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Alain Picard did not aspire to be an artist. He wanted to be a left-handed pitcher in the major leagues. Midway through college, he realized that he didn't have what it takes to be in major league baseball. Luckily, he was also enrolled in an elective art class. The confluence of realizing there would be no professional baseball and an art teacher who praised his skills and commented, "What are you doing with this talent? You could teach this drawing class right now!" caused a change in major to art. And the more he invested in his artistic gifts, the more that passion turned into a flame. "My boyhood dream had to die before I could accept the reality of being an artist."

It was at this point that Alain discovered pastels, as they were part of the required materials for art classes. He purchased a set of Rembrandts and was hooked on the medium. Though he also paints in

oils, pastels are a passion of his. They are his default medium.

To pursue this new dream, Alain needed guidance. He turned to Abe Echevarria, a New York Spanish Harlem artist who suggested that Alain try illustration. Echevarria exposed him to great illustrators like N.C. Wyeth, J.C. Leyendecker, and Norman Rockwell and great painters like John Singer Sargent and Joaquin Sorolla y Bastida, whose bold brush work and large scale was mind-bending.

While he was single, he rented a commercial studio instead of an apartment and began working as an illustrator, taking on portrait commissions as well. An electrical fire across the hallway changed things dramatically. While the fire department was able to save his studio, his work was covered in a thick layer of ash. He moved home feeling more than a little defeated. Then he heard about a John Singer Sargent exhibition in Boston—some three hours away. He drove. Remembering the experience, he says, "Here was this young portrait artist looking at magnificent Sargent paintings. It changed me. I was a different artist after that. As a creative spirit and unique individual, you plug into a power source that is synchronistic-- a pool of energy that you access."

He met the woman who would become his wife, Mirjam and they started a family. (They have two sons.) They became involved in their church, and Alain began teaching art classes there part-time and organizing exhibitions of students' work. Through the church, he and his wife participated in taking a group of students to Rwanda for a World Relief effort. This was an amazing experience which also



Noelle by Alain Picard

PICARD

inspired him to create some wonderful paintings. “We create out of the well of experience,” he says.

The economic down-turn in 2009 nudged him into teaching painting workshops and he has not looked back, Mirjam runs the operations and production of videos and publications. She also manages the teaching schedule to allow time for travel, teaching, and most importantly, family. Family is so important to him, and he cherishes fatherhood. This point was brought home to him the day of the Sandy Hook shooting. He was painting when he got the news. He dropped his brush and headed to his church—just a short distance from Sandy Hook. There he and others helped the community and parents deal with the horrific events of the day. (The gravity and sadness of the moment is still so present—even in our conversation.)

Teaching has become a passion. Alain is an extrovert and teaching is a good counter-balance to the often-lonely act of painting. He also likes being a student, having taken a regular live model painting class with other professionals run by artist Joel Spector. He is currently working exclusively in pastels and has accepted commissions for portraits and landscapes, though sometimes the commissions dictate the medium he will use.

As always, I am curious about the advice an artist would give to their 20-year-old self. Alain’s advice would be to focus and listen. “Every 20-year-old is arrogant and ignorant. I was a hard worker, but my creative spirit was inspired by everything; I had to focus and set goals.”

He would tell himself, “Practice patience and persistence. Set goals and move towards them. And I



Wonder by Alain Picard

would say it's okay not to be perfect. Don't put on a show for everybody." He laughed, "The achiever/performer in me wanted people to be impressed with me. I have moved past that to become more authentic."

A perfect response.

www.picardstudio.com

Go to <https://www.picardstudio.com/store> for information on Alain's books, videos, prints, and workshops.



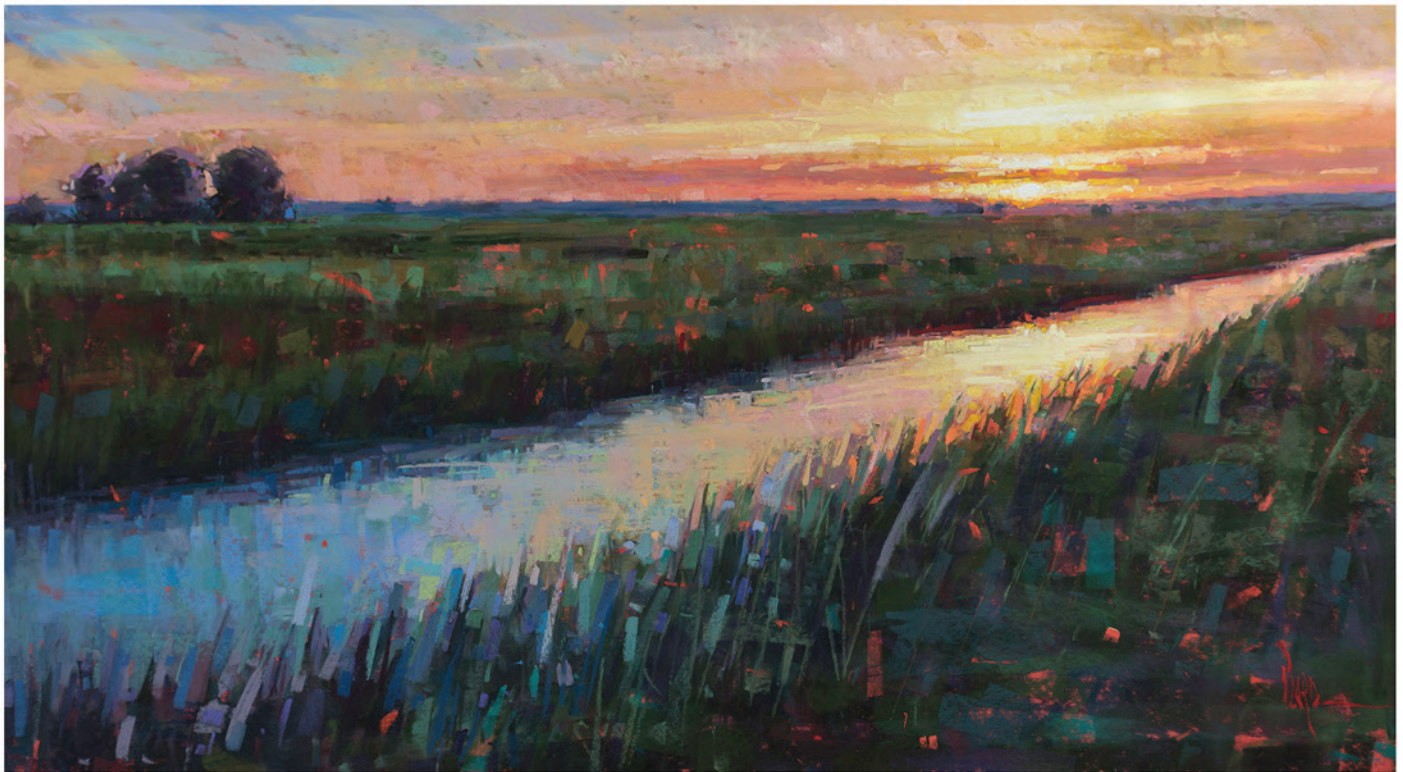
Apsara Dancer by Alain Picard



The Recital by Alain Picard



In the Studio...



Dawning Of A New Day by Alain Picard

Additional work by Alain Picard



Burn Away the Fog by Alain Picard



Lowcountry Blues by Alain Picard