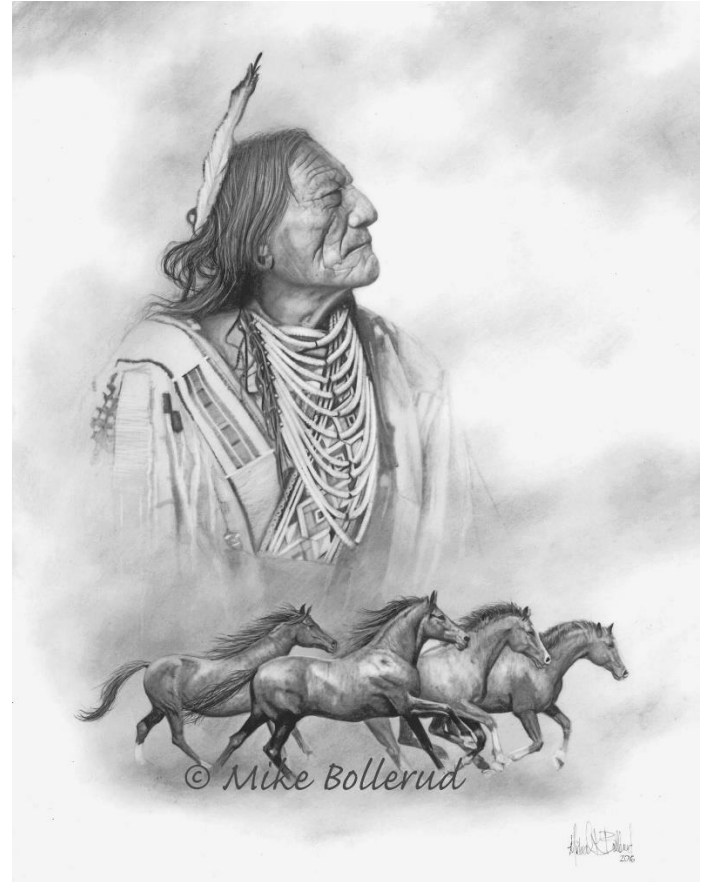


Hard in the Paint

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AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHIGAN ARTIST MIKE BOLLERUD

This month, it is my privilege to talk with my artist friend Mike Bollerud about his art!

Hi, Mike. Can you tell us how long you've been drawing, and how you got started with it?

Hi Paul. Professionally I have been creating pencil/graphite artwork for 24 years. I am self-taught and it was when I was around 6 years old that people (family/friends/teachers) noticed I had a special ability for realism artwork. By the age of 15 I was creating and selling commission portrait work. I have dabbled in pretty much everything from oil/acrylic/watercolor paints. Pastels, charcoal and scratch board. I even worked with wood, leather, metals and sculpted with clay. In my high school years and mainly created with oil paints and quit soon after I graduated from High school. It was around 28 years ago I had found some old work I had done and decided to draw again, just to see if I still could do it, and have been doing it since.

What about any artists who have influenced your work? Or favorite artists who may work in other styles?

Fantasy/Comic artist Frank Frazetta had the biggest impact on me when I was a kid. So much that I always wanted to be like him, an artist when I grew up. I also am a big fan of artists H.R Giger (creature designer from the 1978 movie Alien) Dali, Zdzisław Beksiński and other Surrealist artists. Work that is very much different than my own, but have influenced me since I was a kid.

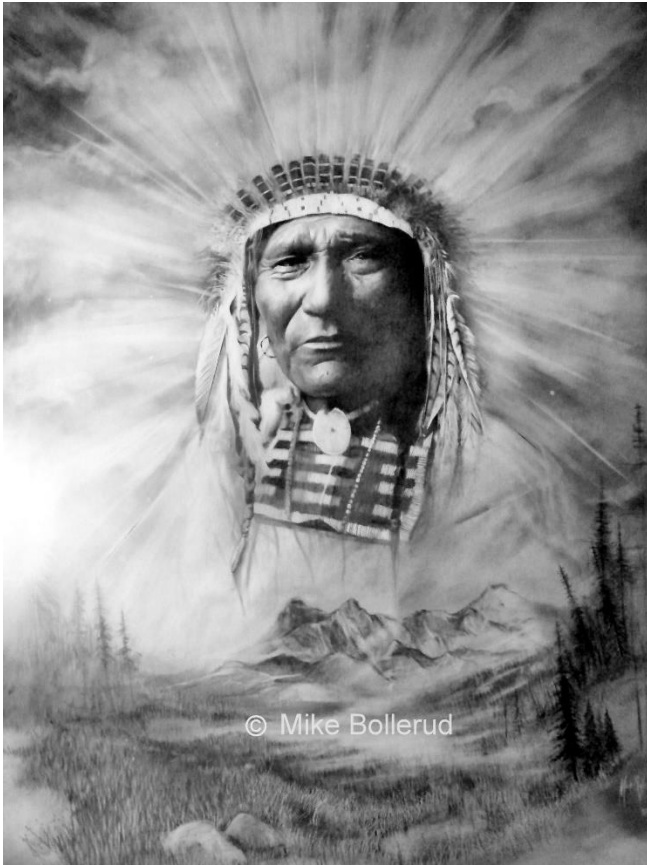
That's fascinating. I too am a big Frank Frazetta fan! What kind of pencil or graphite do you work with, and how can you possibly keep it from smearing as you work on successive parts of the drawing?

Mainly I use powdered graphite and apply it with blending stumps as you would use paint and paint brushes. For my fine-line work I use regular, cheap #2 school pencils and Prismacolor Ebony Pencils. I also use Tombow erasers for the light areas as you would use white paint. To keep them from smearing, I use a scrap piece of paper to rest my hands on and work from the left to right. When I am finished with a piece, I use Grumbacher spray fixative.

Where is the best place for people to see your work (in-person or online)?

People can google/yahoo image search my name to see examples of my work. I also have a page set up in Artwanted under my name "Mike Bollerud" as well as Facebook. I have been procrastinating to have a website built, but it is something I really need to have done.





What most interests you about the subjects you choose to draw?

I mainly create Western/Native American and Wildlife work because its calming, relaxing to me. Almost like a spiritual feeling I get while working on them. I cannot explain it, but it's what I enjoy/love creating, even though my interests are in the works of the artists I mentioned earlier in this interview. My studio is decorated/stuffed with Halloween props, movie monsters, (Michael Myers, etc.) odd art on every wall, things I grew up enjoying, horror films. When people first see my studio, they are in some ways, shocked because it's FAR from what I create. But those are the things I enjoyed when I was a kid, they inspired me in the creativity that went into them. But, it's not the kind of artwork I see myself creating.

Are you ever available for Commission work?

Yes I am, and in fact I Love creating commission/portrait work for people. Mainly because the emotional response I get from clients. People do not get emotional, cry, etc. when they see my personal work. The Native American, Western work. But when they see a portrait I have done of say a relative or pet that has sadly passed away.... I get that reaction a lot. It lets me know... I did a good job and it touches my heart as well.

(The best way to contact Mike for commission work is through his Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/mike.bollerud>

◆◆◆ Upcoming Art Shows ◆◆◆

Saginaw Charter Township “State of the Arts”
(April 30 through May 31, 2023)

4980 Shattuck Road, Saginaw, MI 48603

Shiawassee Arts Center Member Show
(May 2 through July 9, 2023)

206 Curwood Castle Drive, Owosso, MI 48867

Book review – The Moon and Sixpence

by W. Somerset Maugham

From time to time, I may suggest a book for my readers to consider, and my first offering is a novel called, “The Moon and Sixpence” by W. Somerset Maugham. It was first published in April, 1919, making it 104 years old this month. It is very loosely based upon the life of painter Paul Gauguin. Maugham seems to have taken a rough outline of Gauguin’s life, and filled in the rest from his imagination.

The protagonist is a middle-aged English stockbroker named Charles Strickland. Strickland has a wife and two children, and seems to live a conventional life until, seized by a frenzied passion to paint, he leaves them to pursue his art. He first goes to Paris, where he lives in horrid conditions, willing to sacrifice all comfort to achieve his artistic vision. I think that’s the main thing of interest in this book, the character development (devolution, really) of someone who has made it his supreme aim to follow the art Muse wherever she leads. We’ve all read of or known bad people who make good art. Strickland is one of these. Maugham’s talent at bring out his characters really shines here.

In the end, Strickland does achieve his ultimate work, after moving to Tahiti. But it is a surprising way in which it happens, and I’ll not spoil that for you.

Maugham obviously had an interest in the visual arts, for another novel (perhaps his best-known), “Of Human Bondage” also features a protagonist who pursues a career in art. Of the two books, this latter is probably less about art than unrequited love, but I think it’s a stronger novel overall, and I highly recommend it as well!

The Art of Others

I plan each month to feature some work of art by another artist, from my own personal collection. This month, we have a 12" x 12" painting by Ohio artist Amanda McGee!



I came across this wonderful painting at an art contest being held by Studios on High in Columbus, Ohio, back in March of this year. (www.studiosonhigh.com) When I saw Amanda's "Avocado Caller" painting, I immediately had a wave of nostalgia sweep over me. I grew up in central Illinois in the 1960s, and this is how our moms talked to each other. The floral wallpaper adds a "flower power" feeling, completing the tableau.

Amanda's work may be seen on Instagram ([amandamcgeeart](https://www.instagram.com/amandamcgeeart)) and her website (amandamcgee.com). I think she has some more vintage phone paintings for sale, too!

On the Easel

In each edition of *Hard in the Paint*, there will be an *On the Easel* feature, featuring a painting I'm currently working on. This month, I'll show you a 24" x 18" oil painting, which is a rare (for me) foray into the world of international politics. It was the brainchild of the model, who is an Iranian-American friend of mine. Naturally, she has been keenly interested in the [Iranian Women's Revolution](#) which has intensified since late in 2022. I won't give you the full meaning of the writing on our heroine at this time, but suffice it to say that it comprises various hashtags used by the Iranian women, as well as the names of some of the movement's martyrs.



“Women’s Revolution” – Oil on Canvas by Paul Erlandson – Work in Progress