

Hard in the Paint

No. 2

www.paulerlandsonart.com

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Day Dreamer and fish Kisses -by Jennifer Ross

An Interview with Michiganan Artist Jennifer Ross

This month, it is my great privilege to talk with my friend Jennifer Ross about her art!

Hi, Jennifer! Perhaps you could first tell us how long you have been painting, and how you first got started?

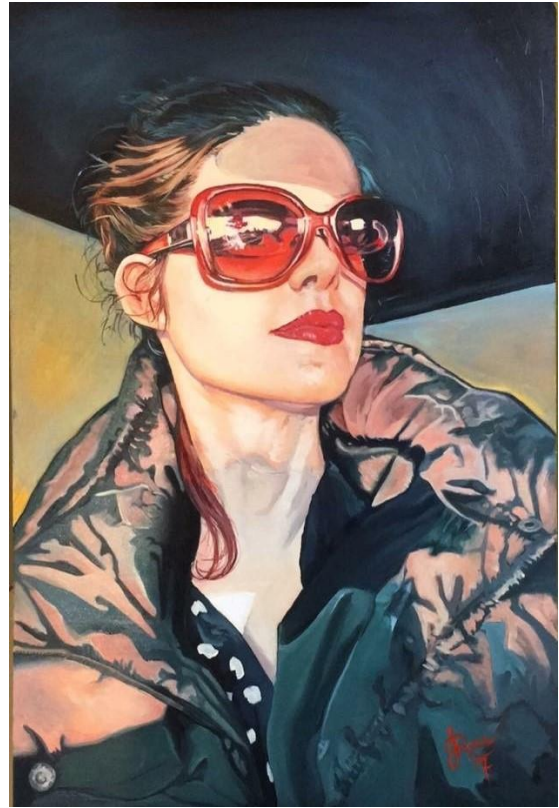
Hey Paul! I started painting about 22 years ago, after I started college. Before then I did a lot of drawing and pastel work. Tom Nuzum was my Studio Art Advisor and Paint teacher and I am thankful for his passion and guidance during those years.

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

I have quite a few artists that I like! John Singer Sargent, Mary Cassatt, Georgia O'Keeffe for the more classic artists. Alex Garant, Richard Wilson, Johan Barrios to name a few of the Artists I follow on Instagram. There are so many great artists from all over the world that I love to watch paint that it is hard to write it all on here. Truly it's the process of a painting that I just love watching- like magic!



Reflection



Self portrait in Red Shades

Do you have a certain fixed method you use for making a painting (e.g., multiple layers)?

I normally start with an idea or photo that sparks my interest. Many may sketch out their idea first with thumb nails, but I tend to jump right into it. After deciding on the size, I will place a turpentine wash down, then start drawing out the figure or portrait. Through the base layer, second and third layers, I will adjust proportion, color or placement. Placing strong highlights and deepest darks in again to make sure there is a full value of tones in the piece. I don't always do 3 layers, some more and some less - depending on what I am trying to express or bring focus to.

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

Online I am on Facebook under JRoss Artistic Creations and Instagram: Jrossartistic. In-person, I normally have at least 1 piece at Shiawassee Arts Center in Owosso and I will be at GFAC in Flint in March with the FAM Guild.

You are the Exhibits Director for the Shiawassee Arts Center (Owosso, Michigan). Can you tell us a bit about the SAC, and also what your work there entails?

SAC is an Art Center that houses Mid- Michigan Artists, with juried consignment areas and 4 featured artist rooms for solo exhibitions. It was started in 1972 to bring Art to Shiawassee County and just celebrated their 50th anniversary last year. The Art Community we have created is active and supportive. I manage the exhibits, artists, working on the website, marketing/ social media, hanging, finding new artists and keeping track of Art that goes in and out. My goal is to showcase our Artists and to spread art to all parts of this county.

◆◆◆ Upcoming Art Shows ◆◆◆

Scarab Club 2023 Gilda Snowden Memorial Exhibition
(March 26 through May 6, 2023)

217 Farnsworth St, Detroit, MI 48202

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

206 Curwood Castle Drive, Owosso, MI 48867

TURNING OFF THE INTERPRETIVE MIND

by Paul Erlandson

I had two “false starts” in painting, one around 1982, involving abstract water-colors, and the second around 1984, using acrylics and trying to paint in a realistic style. Both of these efforts failed miserably, as far as I was concerned. My abstracts seemed pointless (Too much freedom! Too many choices!), and the attempts at realism looked very flat to me.

When I started painting afresh in 1990, I had just read Louis K Meisel's first book on Photorealism. In it, he talks a bit about the methods of the first-generation Photorealist painters. Obviously, the reference photo was central for these painters, and most had an explicit intention to remove their own interpretive influence from the process of making a painting. The point was to develop techniques to allow the artist to make a painting that looked as close to the photograph as possible.

I just tried to mimic their methods. Central to the method is the idea of turning off the parts of your brain that do "interpretation" of the visual. In this sense, painting is probably the closest I ever come to meditation (well, that and the gym). If you ask a kindergarten student to draw a shiny reflective (e.g. "chrome") object placed before her, she will generally reach for a silver crayon, and color in the object solid silver. But that is not what a chrome object does. It is made up of tiny reflected images of everything all around it (often, including the photographer). So, the trick is to stop painting things the way your brain "knows" that they should look, tell your brain to stop talking to you, and let your eyes talk almost immediately to your hand. Then, you can see how things really look.

That interpretive part of the brain is VERY useful in daily life, especially in complex tasks like driving a car. It takes what the eye sees (e.g., a very tiny car, quickly growing larger) and interprets it to mean: there is a car that is currently far away, but quickly approaching. We NEED this interpretive function in daily life, but it can get in the way when we paint. I don't know if other folks wish to paint the way I paint, but when anyone asks, this is the first thing I tell them about how I do it.

The Art of Others

I hope from time to time to include this column, which will feature some work of art by another artist, from my own personal collection. This month, we have a 24" x 30" painting by Detroit's own **Crystal Starks-Webb**, part of her Warrior Series.



I bought this painting because the artist captured the personality of the subject in a such a powerful way that I yearned to know her. She is strong, beautiful, poised, confident, and ready for battle if need be. She is not to be trifled with. Covet her as an ally, fear her as a foe. The vibrance of it makes it seem to leap right off my wall!

Crystal says this of her art work:

I believe art is a visual manifestation of the times we live in. Art is a representation of the past, present and future. I am inspired by artists in music, art and people in politics, strong women like my mother and my children and the times we are currently living in.

I want to capture the true beauty within an individual by telling a visual story through my art. My daughter does not have a large representation of herself in her everyday life, so I wanted to show her that through my art. I want to continue to draw the essence of children because of their innocence, vulnerability, their excitement and enjoyment of life. Everyone has a story and there is only one story to be told and I hope I can express that through my work.

The work of Crystal Starks-Webb may be seen on Instagram at [crystalstarkswebb](https://www.instagram.com/crystalstarkswebb) and her website is: www.crystalstarkswebb.com

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 36" x 48" oil painting, the first in what I hope will be a series of paintings under the title of Girl Factory. This is Girl Factory No. 1 – (Robot Girl). It has a mad scientist vibe to it. I play the part of the robot mechanic, tuning up the beautiful robot, played by world-famous model Melissa Jean.

The photoshoot with Melissa Jean took place in May, 2022. I brought in a local photographer to do the shoot, partially because I needed to be in the shot, but more so because he takes better photographs than I do! I had the vintage oscilloscope (at left) with me at that shoot, but the background was plain. So, I asked the owners of a local hot rod and custom car shop if I could take reference photos of their vintage (and mint condition!) Sun Engine Analyzer. They agreed, and that kindness assured me that I shall enjoy *many* hours rendering the dials, gauges, and lettering into oil paint.

I think the painting will have a fun feel, like a lurid pulp-fiction book cover.



Podcast Recommendation - "Art Juice"

**ART
JUICE**

One of my greatest delights of the past six months has been my discovery of the **Art Juice** podcast! Alice Sheridan and Louise Fletcher (two painters from the UK) have recorded some 192 episodes of Art Juice, beginning in January, 2019. I've listened to them all!

Their manner is informal, humorous, yet thoughtful about both the process of creating art and that of marketing it.

Art Juice is billed as: "Honest, generous, and humorous conversations that will feed your creative soul and get you thinking." Time after time, Alice and Louise deliver on these promises!