

Andrew D. McNair on Being an Artist

I have been captivated from my youth with a desire to create and interpret visual reality. I relate to forms; I feel their space, their dimensionality, their presence. I am intrigued with the craft of recreating three-dimensional objects from reality onto the space of a picture plane and have it be convincing. I want to render images that are appealing, understandable, and edifying to the viewer.

Drawing is my foundational discipline. While I draw to sketch ideas, many of my drawings are finished works. Charcoal and graphite have their virtues, but for the ultimate in line drawing, silverpoint is my medium of choice. The textures and tones created by tiny crosshatchings of silver are utterly fascinating and altogether mysterious. For painting I prefer oils. The vitality and longevity of oil color allows for expressions with depth and character. For spontaneous rendering in color, pastel is my passion. Holding the stick of raw pigment in my hand and making a mark without the intermediate tool of brush or pen is absolutely awe-inspiring.

Environments are important, but the people in those spaces are my emphasis. Specifically, the human face lends poignancy to art in a way that few things can, so I am especially drawn to portraiture. To a certain extent my portraits hearken to the great masterworks of the past, for I am inspired by the remarkable works of the old masters, and I study their art in a disciplined fashion. Like many of the masters, I am deeply committed to direct observation of the human form. I feel that much of the power and vitality of my portraits spring from the fact that I work primarily from life. Working from the live model lets me capture the subtle variations of gesture and complexion which give full expression to a subject's individuality. My intent is to create visually stimulating portraits that are also engaging conversation pieces.

I consider myself a figurative realist. Although this style of art does not dominate the current art scene, it is enjoying a resurgence of interest. This is due in part to a cultural shift away from both modernism and post-modernism. I agree with Donald Kuspit, who states in his book, *A Critical History of 20th Century Art*, that the next artistic era will see the revival of the "esthetic masterpiece". My devotion to draftsmanship, sensuous color, and strong narrative fits well with such a revitalization. I look forward to influencing the transformation into this new era through my work as an artist and a teacher.

April 2007