

an eye for art

meet resident painter John Forrest

Written by Jonathan Pappalardo



It's hard to imagine when looking at his work, but John Forrest is an oil painter with no formal training whatsoever. He picked up a paintbrush six years ago and the rest, as they say, is history.

John's journey towards calling himself a painter began nine years ago when he and his wife, Martha, made the move from Minnesota, where he worked as a claims representative for a worker's compensation program, to The Pinehills. A Midwesterner since birth, John originally hails from Green Bay, Wisconsin.

He always wanted to try oil painting and retirement gave him the time. "After living here about a year and a half, there just happened to be a pen and ink class starting at the Stonebridge Club," John

explains. "You can learn some techniques and things about perspective and I thought well, I don't know anything about that stuff. I don't know anything about drawing, I don't know anything about perspective."

John completed the six-week class but found pen and ink wasn't for him. This led to self-reflection and a realization. "I did pen and ink for about a year and then I decided, well, I'm not getting any younger," he says. "If I really am serious about oil painting, I better get started."

The date was January 2012. John

went off to Michaels, bought a pack of 9X12 canvas paper, three to four "really cheap" paintbrushes and about seven tubes of paint. He came home and using the pen and ink class as a guide, began crafting a still-life painting depicting fruit. "I did that, Martha came up and looked at it and said, those look like balls, they don't look like fruit," he said. "I worked on it some more and it wasn't too bad."

John eventually settled into his groove. Instead of using an easel, he sits at a drafting desk, the kind most frequently used by architects. He mostly paints landscapes, with his

work showcasing his affinity for European villages and houses. Inspiration either comes from a physical picture or more often, an image in his mind.

In terms of his process, John says, "They'll be times when I'll paint background and then paint stuff over it right away. Sometimes I might let it sit for a couple of weeks before I do anything more. I used to have maybe five or six going at once but I find now I tend to only do one or two and finish them. I used to let things sit longer. Now, if it's not drying fast enough I just scrape some paint off and paint over it."

"My whole goal is to have fun," he adds. "I'll go upstairs, and I might be there for seven or eight hours. I forget about everything. I just really enjoy it. I can really get into it."

John doesn't have a website, but he enjoys selling his work at local shows and fairs around the area including the Plymouth Waterfront Festival and Art on the Green. In all, he says he enjoys showing his paintings at local art shows.

John sells his pieces under the guise "Bog Oil Works" a name he created as a nod to his personal heritage. "My last name is Forrest," he says. "When I was growing up, people called me trees and woody and it finally evolved. There was one guy who used to call me boondocks. Bog was also one of my nicknames when I was a kid."

When he isn't painting, John enjoys reading and long hikes in the woods. When they're not at home, visiting a close friend in Edinburgh or paying a visit to Martha's brother, who has lived in the South of France for more than 50 years, they can often be found on driving trips. "For example, we'll fly to Atlanta and then do a 3,000 mile trip around that whole area," he said. "We've done a large area surrounding Dallas. We've done all the US coasts

and Canada, too, we went all across the country. Last fall we finally got to Utah and we went to Vegas. I've always wanted to go to Vegas."

John, who cites Jean Claude Roy and Vincent van Gogh among his influences, has a simple theory that guides his work. "I'm only going to do what I like. I could do stuff that I think would sell, but if it doesn't sell, then I've lost all around because I'm not having any fun with it. But if I paint what I like, whether it sells or not, I've still had fun."

If interested in seeing more of his work, John can be contacted at: johnforrest17@mac.com



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