

REVELATION OF FIGURE AND LANDSCAPE

April 10 – June 6, 2010

LOUIS COPT

Artist's Statement

Do serious artists have the right to change media and style over their artistic careers? Since art is about exploration and creativity, I say, yes. As artists, we are constantly looking over the creative horizon to what is beyond or just around a hidden corner seeking the new and challenging the status quo.

My work has been influenced by a number of things, least of which is the environment in which I grew up and currently live. Rural Kansas and the Flint Hills have been the major focus of my work since the mid 80's. Travel has also had a great influence on my painting. I think it is important to study art history and see the actual works of artists one admires. I enjoy the challenge of interpreting different surroundings through the lens of past experience.

My subject matter has changed somewhat over the years. In the late 80's I became fascinated with the annual prairie burning and have produced many dramatic paintings of the evening fires. These paintings have been featured in national artist's magazines, state publications and has led to many major commissions.

Over the years, I have worked in a number of media including oil, watercolor, pastel, acrylic and bronze. I find myself going back and forth between the various mediums, choosing what I feel is best for the individual art piece and the ideas I am trying to express.

Photography has also played a major role in my artistic development. I have been interested in photography since childhood. Fine art and journalistic photography has helped me hone my observational and compositional skills. The majority of my representational painting starts as photography, for reference material, subject selection and picture composition.

I have always had an interest in figure drawing, painting and portraiture. I feel painting the human figure is probably the most difficult subject matter an artist can tackle. Traditional art instruction includes drawing and painting the figure from life. Using the figure as inspiration teaches hand-eye coordination and close observation of light, shadow and color. I feel these skills translate to all other forms of painting from landscape to still-life to abstraction.

Recent artistic explorations include a series of collage paintings that go back to my interest in abstract action painting I pursued in college. Many of the pieces contain bits of stamps and travel memorabilia collected over the years. The comic imagery comes from my interest in pop art and my experience during the turmoil of the 60's and 70's.

I think as humans, we have an urge to create, to explore and challenge ourselves. Of course, making art is a form of self expression, but it is also a way to communicate with others. To be able to take a vision that is in your head and translate it into a physical form like a painting or a sculpture is a miraculous thing. Making art is also a grab at some sort of immortality, as Andre Malraux said, "All art is a revolt against man's fate."

Artist Biography

Artist Louis Copt was born January 29, 1949 in Emporia, Kansas. Spending time on a farm as a child and growing up near the Kansas Flint Hills has had a profound effect on Copt and has translated into his passion for landscape painting.

He graduated from Emporia State University in 1971 with a degree in art. He held down several jobs including a photographer for the Emporia Gazette, railroad engineer and advertising manager for a major tour operator. Copt began his career as a full time artist in 1985 after returning from a summer of study at the Art Students League in New York City. He also has worked with some of Kansas' most notable artists including Bob Sudlow, Robert Green, Robert Brawley and Stan Herd.

In 1991, Copt traveled with the Kansas Geological Survey on a 17-day rephotographic trip through the Grand Canyon. He was the official artist on the expedition and was able to document the journey with small watercolor studies and later with large oil paintings and lithography.

Copt's current work focuses on the prairie in just about every season but particularly the annual spring burn-off in the Flint Hills. His primary medium is oil on canvas, which allows him to work on a larger scale and provides the depth and color that best translates his particular vision.

Copt is fascinated by the challenge of capturing the force of nature as the fires race across the prairie renewing the landscape for yet another season. Through painting, Copt makes viewers see the landscape in ways they may not think about. By isolating images people often take for granted, Copt hopes viewers will see the landscape in new and different ways and find new a appreciation of what surrounds them.

Since 1985, Louis has had many solo and shared exhibitions. His work is featured in many corporate and private collections throughout the world and, his paintings have been published in several national and regional books and magazines. In addition to his painting, Louis has created a new series of bronze figure sculptures and does film work as well. Louis has taught at the Lawrence Arts Center for over 15 years and has led travel and painting workshops to France, Spain and Italy.

He has also taught classes at the University of Kansas, Osher Institute and has participated in a number of mentoring programs. He has served on many arts organizations boards and is active in several community service projects. Copt and his wife, Phyllis, currently live in Lecompton.



The Albrecht-Kemper Museum of Art

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