



THE HAT MAKER - A DYING BREED • Watercolor, 11.75" x 17.75"

Documenting Artwork

NOW

Saves Work And Frustration Later

Watercolor artist **GABRIEL KREKK** stresses the importance of properly documenting all your work. And he should know - he's working hard now to track down past works that he didn't record.

These days, when Gabriel Krekk, of Belleville, Ontario finishes a painting, it has a number, a date, the number of hours he spent painting it, who purchased it, and more.

"One hundred years from now this information will exist," he says. I want to track down the hundreds of paintings that I've not catalogued." On his website, he asks anyone who has any of his early paintings to contact him so he can catalogue them. "Not that I want them back, although that would be okay," he adds. But, Krekk wants to try to have the information on file for future generations. "My intention is to make an impact on the world with my work."

He also believes it's important to track the time on his works, which he describes as contemporary realism. "In the late '80s it dawned on me that I needed to find out how

much time I put into my originals."

This helps him to determine the price for commissioned works and for his original paintings, which are usually valued between \$2400 and \$3400. The time he spends on a painting can vary between 10 hours and 100 hours.

"One of the things that really alarms me, breaks my heart, is that artists so often undervalue their work. I've always taken the position that I won't sell a piece for less than what I think it's worth." Marketing is a huge part of Krekk's life. The very personable artist is internet savvy and maintains his own website.

"A lot of artists don't have the ability to maintain their own site, so they have to pay somebody." Because he can do that himself, he says, "I have the ability to react very quickly."

KEEP YOUR NAME PROMINENT

But, he adds, "How many people really go out and look for artists on a website?" So he works hard to keep his name prominent with the search engines so that when people do seek Canadian watercolor artists, his name is among the first people will see.

He also has a comprehensive promotional package ready to send at a moment's notice. It includes items such as a cover letter, CD of his paintings, his biography, a brochure, and drymounted posters. Krekk believes in seizing every opportunity, and doing whatever it takes to get his name "out there" and have people and gallery representatives see his artwork. However, he says he has had more success south of the border.

"Canadian galleries are not very receptive to self-promoting artists, so I've had to do different things. The reality is, though, you need money.

It's going to cost you to go out and promote yourself."

"In a world of seven billion people, lift up your head and scream as loud as you can so the world will hear your voice and know you are there."

MANAGING PAINTING TIME WHILE WORKING

Krekk works 12-hour shifts four days a week at Proctor & Gamble, and has less than four years before he retires. Every weekend is a three-day weekend, and he takes that time to paint. So, his painting time is precious. "I set goals for myself every year." Last year he painted 14 paintings, and this year his goal is 20 paintings. Along with his originals, he also has several limited edition prints.

As a young boy, Krekk says he was already known as the neighborhood artist at 12 yrs. old. And, his mother believed in his talent so much that she spent \$700 in the '60s for a course to help him improve his skills. "That was a lot of money - like \$10,000 now!"

In addition to his art, he also loved architecture and studied architecture. He set up a drafting company for home and industrial designers. "I built this incredible little company, but I got tired of working seven days a week. So, I took my career with Proctor & Gamble in 1983. I also tried to write a children's book in 1986, which went nowhere." But, his painting is a success story. He taught himself how to paint in watercolor. "It took me a long time to master the medium and it's a continual learning process."



ABOVE: AFTER THE FINAL BELL • Watercolor, 14" x 18"

BELOW: SURRENDER • Watercolor, 15" x 10"



THE PAINTING PROCESS

"I love working from photographs. I'm not one of those on-location artists." And he isn't a slave to the photos. He changes whatever he feels needs changing to make the work a better painting.

His process starts on 140 lb. Winsor Newton watercolor paper. "I'm pretty exclusive to that. I've tried others with pretty good results, but that's the one I usually use.

I lay out my lines, doing a very light sketch. The less graphite I have, the happier I am. I just do a general shape of what I'm trying to achieve. I work from the background to the foreground with not too much detail in the background.

I want the eye to go straight to the image. Although, I spend just as much time on the background as the flesh tones or detail in the face.

Then, I move into the detail of my subject."

Krekk often does many "side studies" of the main image to make sure he gets it just the way he wants on the actual painting.

White is almost non-existent - he uses the white of the paper - but occasionally he will use a Chinese White wash to soften the background.

His palette consists mainly of Winsor Newton paints, and includes Gamboje, Viridian, Pthalo Blue, Opera Rose, Vermilion, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber, Burnt Umber and Ivory Black. He uses Lowell Cornell and Daler Rowney sable brushes.

"Pthalo blue is one of my favorite colors. Even in my flesh tones there's Pthalo blue. It mixes so well with other colors."

He has his own special recipe for a "black, black," for watercolor paintings. He uses five different layers - Pthalo Blue, Paynes Grey, Ivory Black and Indigo.



WAIT AND SEA • Watercolor, 11" x 16"

On his final layer, he uses a reverse stroke, again with Ivory Black.

I ALWAYS LEAVE THE FACE UNTIL LAST

"I don't take on any painting unless it provides me some level of challenge. There has to be something unique, some level of spirituality. With the 'Winds of Montana,' what I wanted was her hair really blowing with the tight curls. And she had a dark coat and it was closed. I opened the coat and allowed her shape to come out."

"I always leave the face until last. It's like my dessert! After that I'll light myself up a big, fat, Cuban cigar. It's the only bad habit I have," he says, laughing.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT WINNING

His greatest achievement in his point of view was winning the People's Choice Award for his painting Tears for a Mother at a juried exhibition because it was the public, not jurors deciding on the work. When he does public speaking, he tells artists not to rely heavily on what jurors choose.

He tells them, "You know something? You guys are incredible. As the jurors go through and pick the 'best' piece, remember that you are incredible."

Don't worry about winning."

BELIEVE IN WHATEVER YOU WANT TO DO, GO DO IT, AND DO IT NOW!

"Just get your work up there in front of people. Listen to your dreams and then go live them. Believe in whatever you want to do, go do it, and do it now!"

ABOVE RIGHT • WINDS OF MONTANA • Watercolor, 13" x 22-1/2"
BELOW • TEARS FOR A MOTHER • Watercolor, 17-1/2" x 15-3/4"



GABRIEL KREKK is represented by Agora Gallery in New York City, NY, Infusion Gallery in Los Angeles, CA, Kennedy Studios Gallery in Key West, FL, Quinte Art & Frame in Trenton, Ont., About



Framing in Belleville, Ont. For more information about the artist, visit his website at