

NOYES, April OPAA column

Ars Longus, Vita Brevis. “The Arts are long, life is short.” Let’s get cracking.

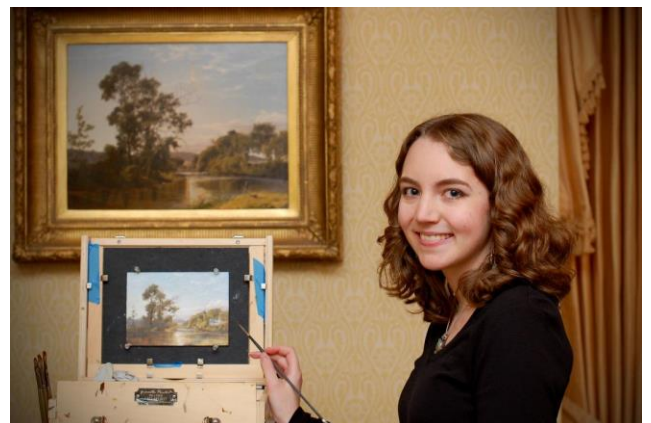
Ironically, last month’s column focused on how life happens when we’re making other plans. This is again the case for much of our country. The Olympic Peninsula Arts Association joins other public venues in canceling both Board and Member’s meetings and our May Art Show to help prevent spread of Covid-19. Our one-of-a-kind OPAA newsletter posts online so members stay up to date over cancellations on workshops, shows; it also offers artistic challenges to share with locked-down fellow artists. I’ll continue this Artwalks column interviewing local artists by telephone and email for the next several months. Like everyone, I’ll restrict my public forays; it’s wise to hibernate for the time being.

On a seriously uplifting note, this month’s interview gives me hope in the midst of depressing statistics. It’s rare that I stumble on a young artist with an old soul and the patience to pursue serious study in order to achieve her personal best. That’s a mouthful, but do take the time for a private tour online at www.StephanieKJohnson.com.

I haven’t met many oil painters on the peninsula. I’m sure you’re out there; I simply find far more watercolorists and acrylic painters these days. When did this happen? In my mother’s painting days, a ‘serious’ painter painted in oils. Maybe concern over harmful chemicals became an issue. Also, oils required wait time for drying layers, especially for detailed works. Frustrating if you were on a roll with a painting! Oil maintains its attraction today, but shares equal limelight with watercolor and acrylic.

In searching out a striking oil painter, I remembered Stephanie’s work from an earlier visit to cooperative Port Townsend Art Gallery. Her still-life paintings stole my notice. While these gems felt old-world, their colors zinged on the gallery wall in new fashion. I was told she was a young upcoming painter, this intrigued me. Such skill applied early on demanded major study. I connected with Stephanie, who agreed to answer my questions.

Stephanie’s been driven to create and express her passion for color, trees, landscapes from a very early age. Her super supportive parents enrolled her in art classes by third grade. An encouraging teacher further encouraged her interest in color early on. At sixteen, already leaning towards representational style, she visited a show in Tacoma of the Hudson River School of Artists. Frederic Church’s works especially caught her attention. Stephanie set her sights on the Aristides Atelier at Gage Academy in Seattle. At eighteen she enrolled in a regimen of strictly applied study: one year of drawing, another of black and white oil painting, a third of restricted palette (both warm and cool), and fourth of full color palette. An ambitious and disciplined endeavor for an eighteen year-old, their youngest graduate to date. Proof of her accomplishment is evident in her work.





Regarding her landscape paintings, Stephanie's toured Tuscany among other areas in Italy, camera in hand. As photographs don't capture everything, she keeps sketchbooks with reference notes and drawings for painting. While Stephanie paints trees, nature and city streets in this manner, still-life subjects are set up in her studio (no photographs for these). Some of her favorite all-time painters are Rembrandt for his texture and use of light, along with Vermeer. Besides Frederic Church, Sanford R. Gifford is appreciated for his skies, color transitioning-shading. Stephanie

takes some current online courses with David Leffel, an oil-painter much appreciated for his charcoals, still-life paintings and portraits.

Of course I touched on all-important personal goals which artists share regardless of age. Stephanie wants to hone her painting skills and individual style by continuing to paint from life...in which she is well on her way. As for a wish or ideal dream? After consideration, possibly to paint a master-copy on-site of an old-master's painting, perhaps Rembrandt's self-portrait at the Frick Museum.

Currently, Stephanie's been painting for an Italian-inspired show of landscape and still-life renditions for the City of Kent, Washington as a featured artist. Asked to apply, she was juried in to Kent Centennial Gallery's calendar of shows last July. The show was scheduled to run April 1st – to May 18th. I expressed concerns over Covid-19 closures of public venues and Stephanie admits this may happen. The Edmonds Arts Festival in June is an event Stephanie would also have been part of; unfortunately, it has been canceled. Pandemics weren't in the plan.

This young painter has a body of work and the drive to outlast present-day situations. I see many art exhibitions and much attention in her future.

Stephanie K. Johnson, associated member of Oil Painters of America

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Extra Eye on the Peninsula:

I'd hoped to suggest personal Artwalks outside to breathe and relieve stress. All Washington county parks and many places where we usually walk are closed. Dog-walkers, runners are using the verge along narrow streets, vying with bicyclists – your neighbors have little choice so please drive carefully.

It's spring. Give your mind a rest. Ground yourself (dig in your backyard). Visit your painting or book club via Zoom or Facebook. Share ongoing work and vent – we're all frustrated. Stay safe and well. OPAA: sequimarts.org

Stephanie K. Johnson (photograph credit to Susan Winokur)
Triton's Treasures