



Brush Strokes



by Mary Baumgartner

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PAINT WHAT YOU FEEL BUT CONECT WITH YOUR VIEWERS

What do you feel when you look at this painting? Does your eye go right to the three rams? Do you wonder where this was painted? Are you smitten by the sun just setting over the mountains? Can you imagine the heat of the day and hunger of these animals for something green?

Are these animals in the wrong place, perhaps a desert or could they be in the dry area of Washington State? All these thoughts must have been in the mind of the painter but the main thought was to show them alive.



This painting was done by Mary Baumgartner at the request of a gentleman who spent much of his life with many varieties of animals. The ram on the right lying down was the result of a full size ram mounted over the fireplace of the owner who I'll call the "mighty hunter." The two other animals were added to the composition in order for the artist to be able to sleep at night after sitting on a ladder in this man's house capturing the pose and anatomy of the lifeless trophy hanging over the fireplace.

I've had lots of assignments and commission paintings but this is the only one I've had painting from taxidermy. From this work evolved three big commissions for stained glass designed for the hunting lodge of the same man depicting areas where he had hunted. They consisted of two scenes from Africa and one from the extreme Northwest. It took about a year to finish these three stained glass pieces due to their size—approximately 3' x 6½' for interior windows in the hunting lodge.

The emphasis here is always what the viewer thinks of your art. Compromises have to be made, but if you can keep the viewer happy, you'll always have an audience. What I tell my students is to try and capture an image in their painting (whether a scene, wildlife, flowers, people or abstract) that the viewer will spend more than 5 seconds looking at when it is shown in a gallery. If you've ever watched a group of people viewing a big show, you can see they will many times go by a painting as though it were wallpaper without even scanning what they are seeing. If this is the art you produce, then you'll have to have more consideration for your viewing audience. Capturing a viewer for even two minutes means you have made a mark in their concentration and they'll remember your art if they ever consider buying a painting or art object. I've exhibited in many large art shows which have attracted more than 200 people at the opening so I'm passing on what I have observed.