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Carrying on...



It has not been the best of years for me... *for reasons that have nothing to do with my health for a change!* The events of 2015 that have affected me so deeply have been concerning health issues of close members of my family. It is hard to concentrate when worry takes over your psyche, and it is not always possible to do your best work. You carry on, but your attention seems to be in some other dark place. That art can offer a distraction when such things are going through your mind is helpful, and the right brain activity does seem to push the uncertainty into another universe for a while. So, whether the results of these attempts to create are successful or not, carrying on is still important...

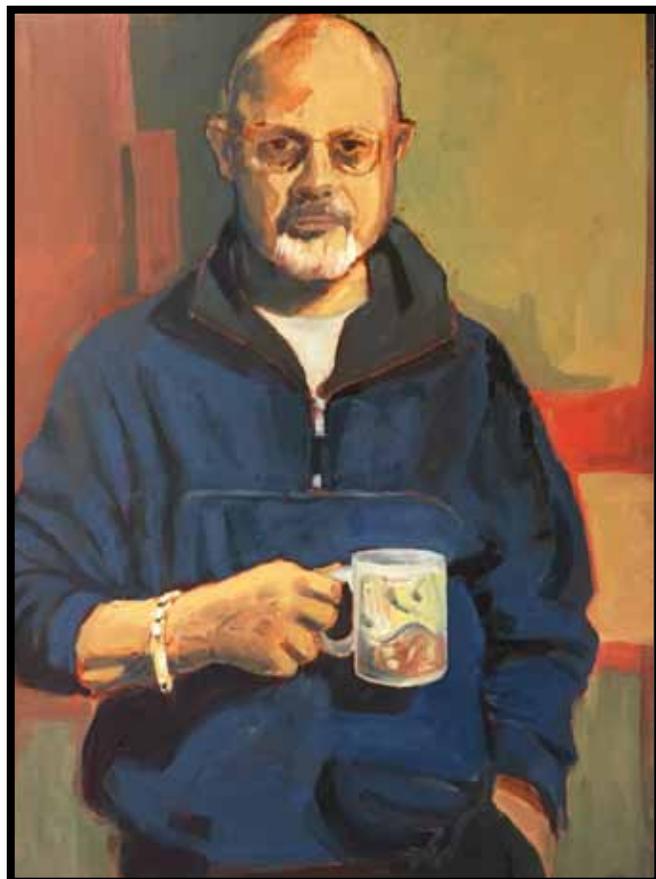
I have not painted in oils for a long time... probably 40 years or so. Mostly my painting always surrendered to the processes of my abstract works or used color as an enhancement to their sculptural form. I have often relied on acrylics or other types of commercial paints, but not oils. So it was a bit of a challenge for me when I decided in August that I wanted to update my understanding of oil painting by using the materials of the "old masters" after so many years.

Jumping right in, I started with two oil painting workshops taught by Cameron Schmitz at the River Gallery School in Brattleboro, VT. Cameron is a great teacher who "eased" me into the process I had given up on so long ago. Unlike my Art School painting instructors in the "60's" who promoted their *laissez-faire* approach to teaching, Cameron was very organized and pragmatic. Starting with the organization of a palette, understanding color temperature and mixing as it applies to the skin, as well as currently safer replacements for the more toxic chemistry of the older techniques.

We began studies on paper drawn from the figure. The six 3 hour long sessions were too short to expect major paintings, but then, that wasn't my initial goal anyway.

Following those workshops I decided to take advantage of a NH State College policy that permits persons over 70 to attend any college classes for free with the permission of the instructor. This time I registered for the fall semester with Peter Roos, who teaches a class in figure painting. Peter, of course, is a long-time friend who I knew would further help me develop my skills with oils. His 8:00 a.m. classes twice a week, have not only gotten me up early, but have pushed me beyond what Cameron was able to do in such a short time. The benefit of working in a class with young students is also quite a bit of fun, and their enthusiasm is infectious. Peter has managed to treat me just like his other students, with helpful criticism and useful instruction. I may have a greater experience in drawing the figure than do the students that surround me in his class, but most of them have more experience with the paint than I do. I find much of their work inventive and ambitious.

Below are some of the oil painting studies I attempted to develop over the last couple of months. None of them are complete, and each of them suffers from my inexperience with oil paint. There's always something to learn...



ABOVE: Practice Studies - Oil on Paper

A limited palette with my pre-mixed fleshtones



Self Portrait Study - Oil on Panel