

OUR FEATURED ARTIST: INGRID ARNET CONNIDIS

My father was an artistic person and I probably learned to love painting as an art form and activity from him. But I was a late starter, having not defined myself as someone who was 'artistic.' I promised myself that I would take some painting lessons while on a sabbatical in southern France and in 1995 I took a six-day painting class. The instructor, Barbara Bonneaud, was the perfect start for me because she had me just jump in. I had no idea about the most basic elements like where to hold a brush or how much paint to squeeze on the palette and I loved learning by doing. That has been pretty much my approach ever since.

When I returned to London, I was very keen to pursue painting and signed up for what was then a PUC (Public Utilities Commission) art class and had the very good fortune to have Fred Harrison as my instructor. He had and has (he is now in New Brunswick) an incredible knack for seeing where a painter is trying to go and for making just the right suggestions to get you there. His invitation to join the Tuesday night group for open painting in which we would start with quick gesture drawings, taking turns as the model, and then follow with communal critique for those who wanted feedback on their work, and then with independent painting. Fred would circulate, making himself available to those who wanted input from him. We've carried on since Fred left and now meet on Wednesday afternoons with Paul Abeleira, Corinne Garlick, and Jamie Jardine as our helpful guides. I have also learned valuable lessons from a wonderful local artist, Kim Harrison, a masterful oil painter, through his workshops and the Monday morning group that he leads. Other artists have provided stimulation and ideas through a variety of workshops that I've attended over the years.

Becoming a painter opened up a whole new world to me. I look at and see everything differently – a bit like the Wizard of Oz when the world turns from black and white to colour. My paintings have been described as whimsical. Because I am not a trained painter as such I paint intuitively, and I think that this might encourage individuality in my work as I focus on what I'm painting and how it feels to me. Because I'm happy when I'm painting, I think that my paintings have a happy feeling to them too whether my subjects are old homes, crows, trees, landscapes, animals. Whatever the subject, I am drawn by colour and usually paint in oil or acrylic. Lately I'm trying to spend more time sketching in pencil when I study a subject outdoors.

I met a wonderful community of artists through Fred's Tuesday night group and was invited to join two clubs, the Lambeth Art Association and the Gallery Painting Group, a plein air group that paints in various outdoor locations in the area from May to October. Both clubs sponsor workshops and hold an annual show

and sale, a good start to learning about how to move from painting to showing one's work. TAP (The Arts Project) is a strong supporter of local artists and was a great venue for my first two solo shows.

My initial years of painting were combined with working as a Professor in Sociology at Western while my younger two children were growing up. I mostly painted in a small laundry room off the kitchen and at the kitchen table which meant having to pull out and then put away painting supplies. Since December of 2016 I have been lucky to share a studio at the original Factory Building on Adelaide Street (Studio III, 538 Adelaide St N, Suite 210) with Moira Burke and Catherine Eichstedt. We have hosted two Open Houses and were participants in this year's London Artists' Studio Tour. We paint in the studio together and individually and learn from each other.

You ask about advice to aspiring artists? One suggestion would be to find ways to meet other aspiring artists. Classes offered through various venues are a good start for this. Some possibilities include Spectrum through the city of London; TAP (The Arts Project); Museum London (the art gallery); Fanshawe College; and For the Love of Art. In my experience, having one's work critiqued and critiquing the work of others is a very valuable learning tool and is a form of mutual support among painters. As a good friend of mine, artist Donna Andreychuk, has often said, the most important thing is to paint. Make the time and paint. Most of the painting that I have done, I have done on my own.

My family have been great supporters of my artistic efforts and I have found painting a great complement to my work. I've enjoyed bringing together work and art by using two of my paintings on the cover of my last two books. I have also used my paintings as part of professional presentations. Now, as I head toward retirement, I look forward to having more time to paint in the studio and outdoors, trying to catch up with the many ideas I have for the paintings to come.

Web site: ingridconnidis.com
 Studio III facebook: www.facebook.com/Studio3artists



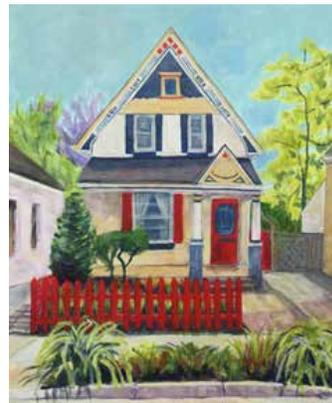
Little Tin Goat in Blue - Oil



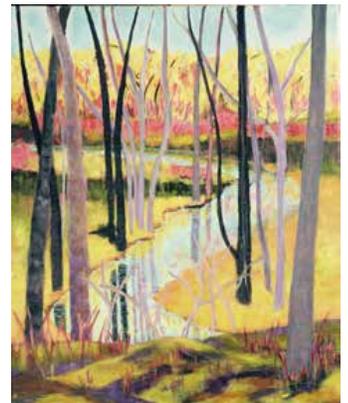
Mystic Winter - Oil



Time Out (Crow Series) - Acrylic



The Red Picket Fence - Acrylic



Burst of Spring - Acrylic



Richmond Street Gingerbread - Acrylic