

# Painting sale to benefit library

By **Helen Schmidling**  
Correspondent

“Icarus on The Metolius” is a varnished watercolor by Sisters artist Paul Alan Bennett. The original owner of the painting died recently. In his will, he asked that this rare painting should be re-sold to raise funds for the Sisters Library. As sellers of Paul Alan Bennett’s fine art, Sisters Gallery & Frame Shop is managing this process.

“Icarus On the Metolius” was originally completed in 2003 as a donation piece for Sisters Folk Festival’s My Own Two Hands fundraiser. That year’s theme centered on flying. It was the first and only time that Bennett created the title of the work before making the painting.

Bennett, a former art history teacher at COCC with an M.A. in Greek history, lived in Greece for six years. He used several art history and Greek mythology references in the work.

Icarus’ father, Daedalus, was a talented Athenian craftsman, who built the labyrinth for King Minos of Crete, to imprison the

Minotaur, a half-man, half-bull monster born of his wife and the Cretan bull. Minos also imprisoned Daedalus in the labyrinth because he gave Minos’s daughter, Ariadne, a ball of string in order to help Theseus, the enemy of Minos, to survive the labyrinth and defeat the Minotaur.

In order to escape the labyrinth, Daedalus made two pairs of wings from wax and feathers for himself and Icarus. Daedalus warned his son not to fly too close to the sun, nor too close to the sea. But Icarus, overwhelmed by the giddiness of flying, soared too close to the sun, whose heat melted the wax. Icarus kept flapping his wings, but the feathers fell away and he fell into the sea.

In this painting, we see Icarus crashing down into the waters of the Metolius River behind an oblivious fly fisherman. Icarus appears to be breaking out of a kind of organic shape or body halo, called a mandorla. In Byzantine paintings, the Virgin Mary is often portrayed as surrounded by a mandorla.

Icarus is painted red. In Monoan art, male figures are

usually painted red. There was also a style of fifth-century B.C. art called red-figure pottery.

The feathers falling down are references to the myth of the death of the winged horse, Pegasus. According to the story, after his death, the body of Pegasus was physically taken up into the heavens to be made into a constellation. One of his feathers slowly floated back to earth.

The Icarus Fly is shown in the little circle to one side of the fisherman. It is made out of the fallen wings of Icarus. It reflects the contemporary art of fly-tying in a humorous way.

The fisherman is totally unaware of Icarus crashing behind him. This is similar to “The Fall of Icarus,” a 16th-century painting by Pieter Bruegel, where ancient themes were often portrayed in contemporary scenes. In Bruegel’s painting, Icarus falls into the sea, while in the foreground, a plowman pays no attention to him.

Both Bruegel’s painting and Paul’s painting ask the question: “Is it more important to just get on with the work at hand, or to pay closer



PHOTO PROVIDED

The sale of “Icarus on the Metolius” will benefit Sisters Library.

attention to the often unseen magical events that occur, perhaps daily, in our lives?”

For more information on the benefit for the Sisters Library, contact Sisters Gallery & Frame at 541-549-9552.

*Editor’s note: Helen Schmidling helps to manage Sisters Gallery & Frame Shop.*



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