

Painting workshops

Eric Wiegardt's online mentoring, Saturdays at 8:45 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., remote

Watercolor Landscape Paint Along, April 13, 9 a.m. to noon, remote

Watercolor Floral Paint Along, May 4, 9 a.m. to noon, remote

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'Tidal Morning' by Eric Wiegardt.

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Depicting the region in bright colors and bold brushstrokes, his expressionistic work reflects an embedded sense of place, an inner landscape which is second nature. "Painting is independent of what we see in reality, and we can use any subject as an artist to express ourselves. We don't have to stick to the colors that we see," he said. Working from a landscape that many associate with coastal fog and muted tones, Wiegardt often adds a touch of rose or cerulean, an emotion on the canvas. "If I see something that gives me a lot of joy, and I want to express that joy, I can use the colors to express that," he added.

One of Wiegardt's greatest joys is painting outdoors. It is also one he shares with students, some on the Long Beach Peninsula and others in distant outposts. Teaching in both acrylic and watercolor, he encourages bold, loose painting techniques. "Most people consider watercolors as a delicate, light medium, but it doesn't have to be. It can be very aggressive, and a lot of it takes rich

color and bold brushwork, and I show them how they can achieve those results," he said.

Students come away from the workshops, offered both outdoors and in, with a new take on expressing what they see, on mixing paints and working in a more free, expressionistic style, even if it's learned remotely. "The subject matter varies widely, from landscapes to florals to cityscapes to street scenes, but a lot of the subject matter more recently has been around here," Wiegardt said. The artist has begun to once again offer workshops in-person, but will offer both an ongoing mentorship program and "paint along" sessions remotely in April.

He looks forward to a return of plein air classes in the summer, hosting two destination workshops, one on San Juan Island, Washington, in June and another on Ghost Ranch in New Mexico in September.

A typical workshop day outdoors starts with a demonstration. "Then I'll cut them loose," Wiegardt said. "Let them paint for a while, then we'll come back together in the afternoon for another demonstration or critique of their work," he added.

In the meantime, the Ocean Park artist will continue to paint in the studio, collecting an impressive set of exhibitions and shows over the past season. One of his favorite recent works is a landscape from Willapa Bay, featured in the Vintage Watercolorists of Washington Art Show on Camano Island, Washington. "It was a sunset just right after the opening season of clam digging this last fall," he said.

Other recent shows have included the Watercolor West International Juried Exhibition, where he took home the Reciprocal Award for a painting of Beards Hollow, and the California Watercolor Association 52nd National Exhibition, where he showed a Willapa Bay sunrise piece titled "Moment of Brilliance." Next year's lineup is already in the works, with an exhibition scheduled in summer 2023 on behalf of the National Watercolor Society. The painting up for display is one from last year's unusual snow, one of those moments that brings joy, and Wiegardt plans on many more of those to come.