89

February / March 2013

VOTED THE BEST ARTIST MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD

Le magazine pour les artistes par des artistes du monde entier • Das Magazin für Künstler von Künstlern aus der ganzen Welt
La revista para los artistas por artistas de todo el mundo • La rivista per gli artisti di artisti da tutto il mondo
来自世界各地的杂志 供艺术工作者 • 世界中からのアーティストによるアーティストのための雑誌 • 세계 각국에서 예술가로 예술가 잡지

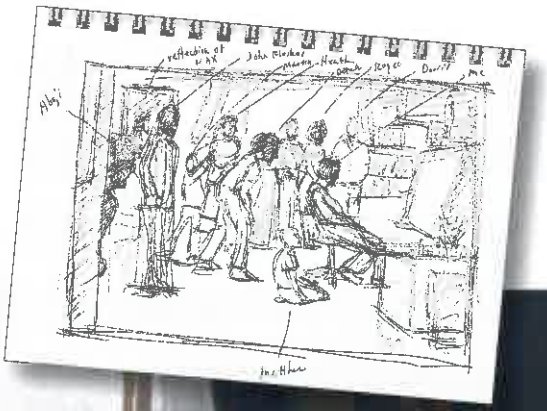
the magazine for artists by artists from around the world

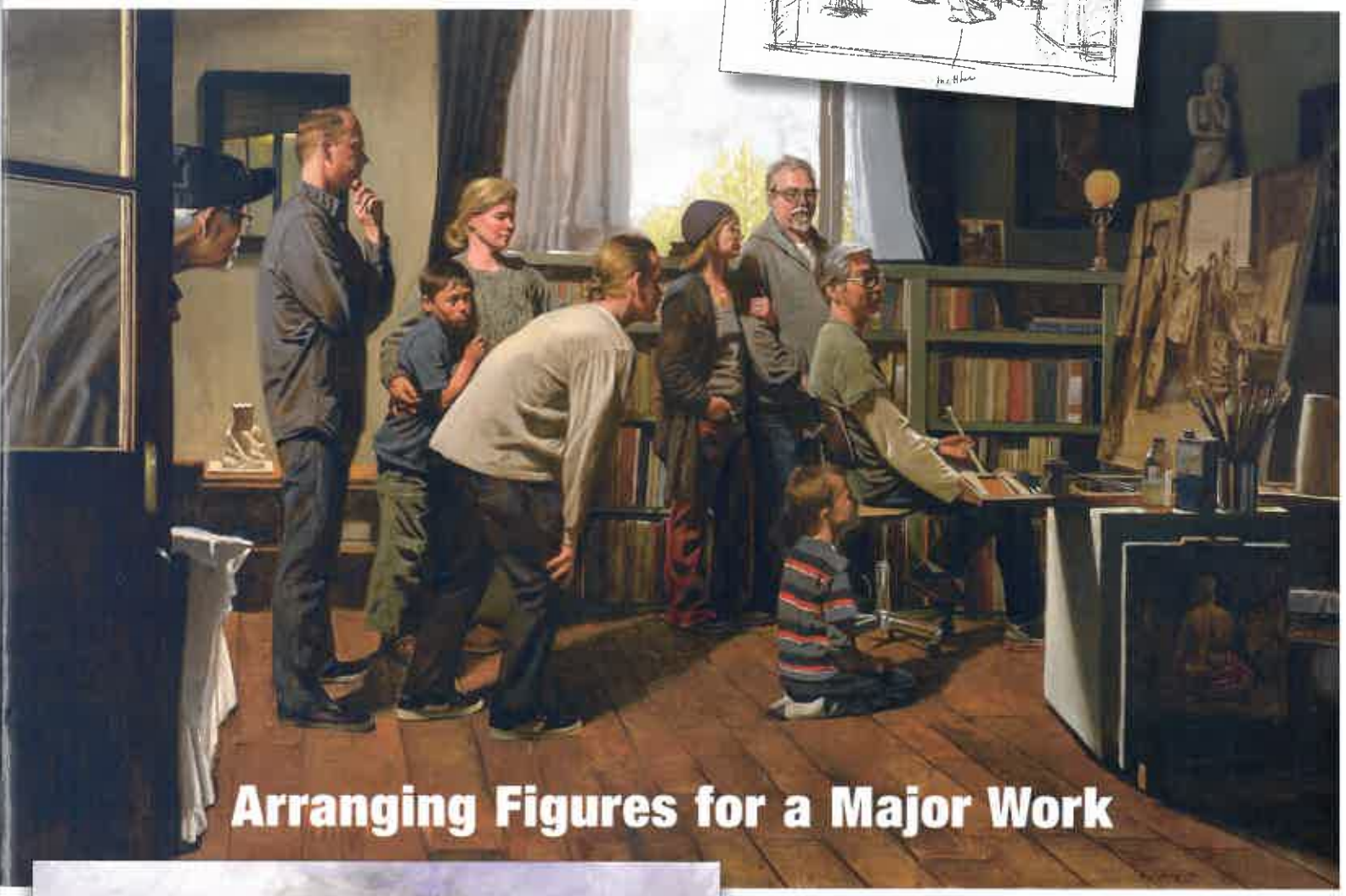
international artist®

.com

Using Backlighting for a Brilliant Effect

How Create Ink Wash Paintings





Arranging Figures for a Major Work

Stimulate Your Creative Expression

a new series by Gerald Brommer

DISPLAY UNTIL 03/18/2013

$7.95

89

USA $7.95
CAN $7.95
UK £4.95

0 09281 01284 9

USA **WARREN CHANG** GIVES US AN IN DEPTH DESCRIPTION ON THE CREATION OF A FIGURATIVE PAINTING

FIGURATIVE ARRANGEMENT STEP-BY-STEP

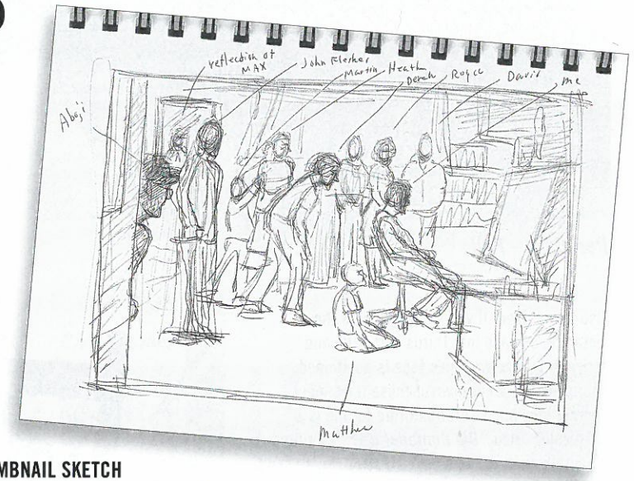
OIL

One of my favorite subjects that I have been pursuing for the past 12 years has been, what I've called "Biographical Interiors". I am inspired by the works of the past, in particular many of the 17th century artists, such as Rembrandt, Vermeer and Diego Velasquez. These interior paintings depict scenes from my own life, such as self-portraits, scenes of family life, studio and classroom environments, as well as the people who inhabit them, myself, family, models, friends, other artists and art students. Since this subject is the life that I lead, I've found the subject very personal to me and always evolving, as my own life changes and evolves.

This latest painting, which I recently completed over the last 5-6 months, falls into this category of my work. I've titled it "Figurative Arrangement", which is more of an abstract title, rather than say "Studio Visitors" because this was to me, what the painting was about, an exercise in figure composition. It depicts a fictional gathering of friends and family to my studio, all in the efforts to lend me advice on my latest painting, which happens to be, the very painting we are all depicted within.

It was completed with the aid of photographic reference. I mention this because many of my works of art are painted from "life", with the use of no photograph reference. I believe it's important to paint from "life" in order to exercise one's skills and creativity and to better capture the "spirit" and essence of the subject. Having said this, I also believe that photographs can be a very useful tool in creating art, even great art.

The following is a step by step description of my process of creating this figurative painting.



STAGE ONE THUMBNAIL SKETCH

The thumbnail sketch was drawn from my imagination using a ball point pen in my sketch book (approximately 7 x 9"). This was used to help direct my subjects in their poses, it captures the gestures and movement of the figures and the arrangement. You can see my notes indicating whom is posing where.

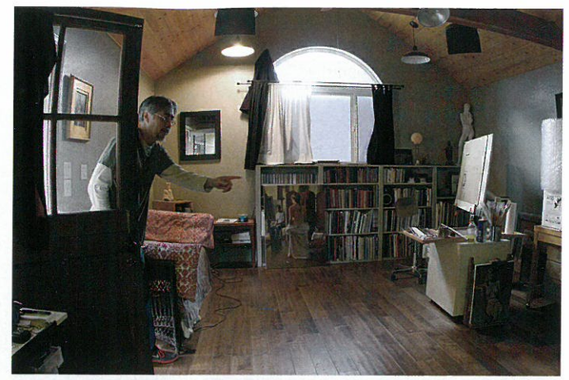
I believe this first idea sketch is the most important stage in the development of a painting. Too many artists rely on random photographs taken on vacations and trips to provide them with their inspiration in painting. Why not develop your own idea, and make it happen! This is not to say, that taking pictures first, cannot result in good paintings and art but why depend always on chance of nature and circumstance to determine your art. Sometimes an idea may lie within my head for months, if not years, before I start to put it down on paper. It's so rewarding to develop an idea, totally your own, and then put in the work, to make it a reality.

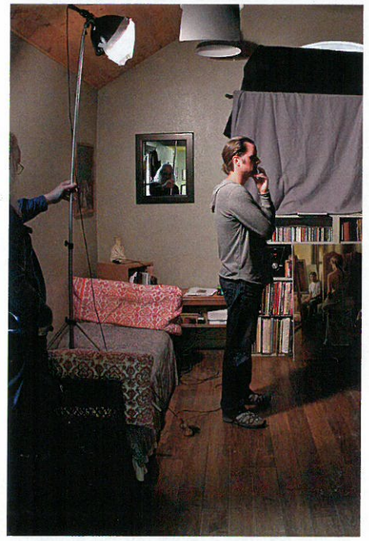
STAGE TWO PHOTO SHOOT

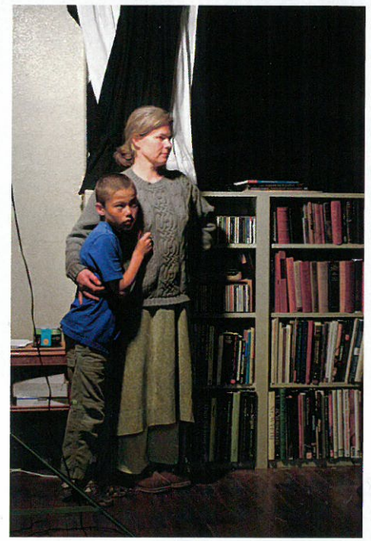
I may have misspoke in saying that the thumbnail idea is the most important step, I actually think "all" the steps are important. Certainly, if you're working from photographic reference, the success of your painting relies so much on the success of your photo shoot. Sometimes you have to go back and take more pictures of your background or hire a different model or create a different lighting. Any number of changes to developing your picture for your vision to stay on track. It's worth the extra time and work needed to create the work you envision, with the quality you aspire to achieve.

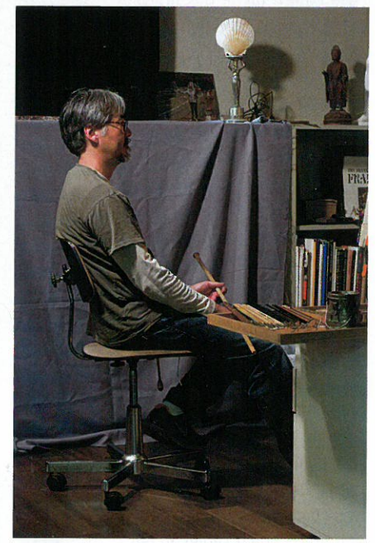
Ideally, it would have been great to have all my models, or "actors" as I like to refer to them, all together posing together. Or at the very least groups of them, so that they can be arranged in groupings of 3 or 4. This way problems of composition, overlapping figures and lighting can be handled all at once, solving problems right from the outset. Unfortunately, this was not possible, and in most cases, I had to pose and photograph each and every model one at a time, each "actor" arriving at different days of the week and month according to their and my own schedules. Its more difficult to sustain your vision this way, but if you are inspired, you just have to hold on to your vision, the thumbnail sketch being your foundation and key.

Opposite are a series of some of the photos taken during the photo shoot stage. You can see me setting up the studio for the photo shoot, arranging curtains, the lighting and set up. I included also some random pictures of the models posing, from hundreds that were taken.

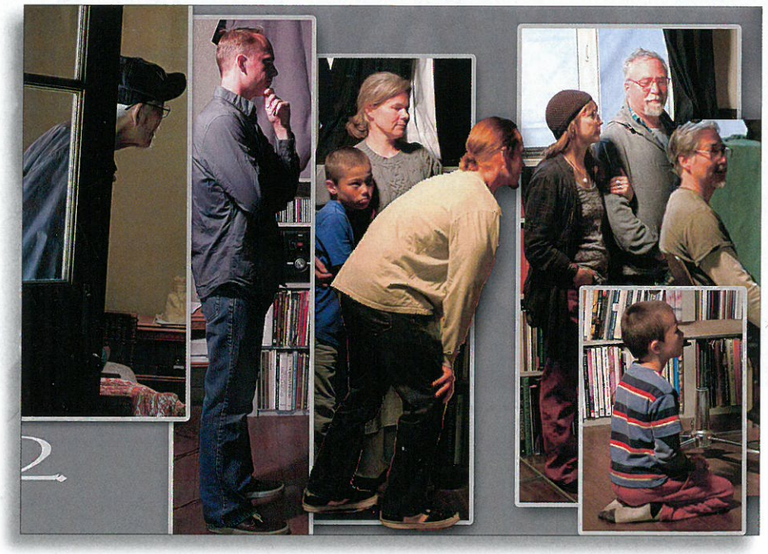


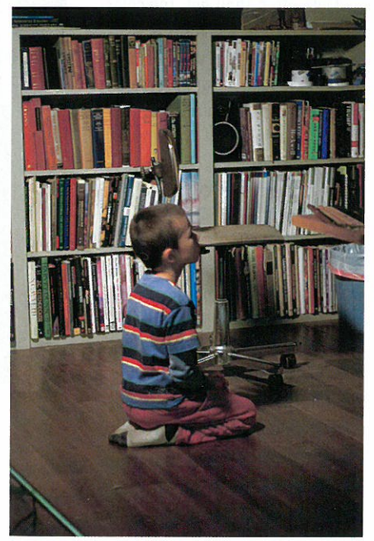






"Certainly, if you're working from photographic reference, the success of your painting relies so much on the success of your photo shoot."





STAGE THREE FINAL DRAWING

I used black and white pencil on gray matte board to develop the final drawing. It measures approximately 20 x 30". The main objective was in arranging and the placement of figures within the studio interior space. Because of this, the drawing is more line oriented in order to clearly define where each figure is placed. In some passages, just an outline is used to indicate certain objects.
I will later transfer this drawing to the final canvas using an opaque projector to roughly indicate where the placement of figures and objects will fall.

I have this final drawing xeroxed to a smaller size, for two reasons, one to aid in projecting to a larger size and secondly to work on for the color sketch.

STAGE FOUR COLOR STUDY

The final drawing was xeroxed to a smaller size and then pasted on illustration board. I then applied a layer of matte medium over the mounted xerox drawing, so the oil paints would adhere to the surface. This color study was completed in a few hours and pretty much serves to tell me how the final painting will look. Emphasis on broad shapes and color, not on details.

More often than not, the color study is more interesting than the final painting. I've been told more than once, from observers, that they like the color study better than the final painting. I can see their point. The color study is looser and captures all the "feel" of the final version without the fuss.

For me, all the joy that comes in discovering the magic of how the color and mood is achieved is experienced in the color study, leaving the process of executing the final art, sometimes more of a mechanical exercise. Even though this may be true, I still think its the best way to achieve the best results when working in a larger scale.

STAGE FIVE UNDERPAINTING

The underpainting was completed in raw umber using turpenoid as a medium and thinner only. First transferring the final drawing to canvas, I outline the drawing loosely using vine charcoal. This is only to rough in the placement of figures and the interior of my studio. The vine charcoal is ideal for this purpose because it will rub off easily and disappear as you apply the oil paint. I then can proceed with drawing and painting with a brush using the raw umber and using the outline in vine charcoal as my guide when studying and referring to my photographic reference. This stage can take as little as one day, or a couple of weeks, depending on complexity. This being very complex, took me a couple of weeks to complete. This tonal stage resolves all the drawing, composition and values. The umber underpainting helps act as a unifying agent for the applied color and often I will allow some of this umber underpainting to show through in the final painting, adding interest in the abstract surface of the painting.

"This tonal stage resolves all the drawing, composition and values."

STEP SIX PAINTING IN PROGRESS

I had the painting photographed at the half way point to illustrate the process. You'll notice the passages of painted and unpainted areas of the underpainting. For this particular painting, I thought it best to concentrate on resolving the figures first and background environment last. In scenes of the outdoors I usually do the opposite, that is, painting the background first and figures and foreground last. You'll notice the background areas just surrounding the figures, particularly where the heads are painted. I try to paint the surrounding areas around the figures and heads, so that when resuming, I can paint more naturally back into passages without areas looking too separate. Its important for all elements to appear unified, particularly when painting multiple figures and painting at least part of the background surrounding the figures and heads allows me to resolve at least part of the edge relationships, how the head and figure relate to the background in terms of edge, which helps to determine the sense of depth and atmosphere. I'll later make adjustments if necessary but this gets things a little closer to the final results.

"For this particular painting, I thought it best to concentrate on resolving the figures first and background environment last."

STEP SEVEN THE PAINTING IS FINISHED

Here is the finished painting, measuring 40 x 60", I later decided to crop three inches off the left, which I feel worked better, allowing the entrance of my father to bring our eye into the gathering and ultimately, the focal point of myself in front of my easel.

It's mainly the shadows which act as the unifying element in the painting. While color is revealed mainly in the areas of light, the shadows remain a constant. The shadows being all relatively the same coloring and tonality unify all the figures together, so they don't read as separated figures, but more as a unit.

After describing this process, I feel as if I relived it and I feel pretty tired. I'm sure you'll understand how this can take as long as the 5 months it took to complete.

From left to right, are my father Namgui Chang, my publisher John Fleskes, my wife Heather and older son, Martin, my assistant Derek in the middle, neighbors David and Royce McCornack, myself and my youngest son, Matthew on the floor.

"It's mainly the shadows which act as the unifying element in the painting."

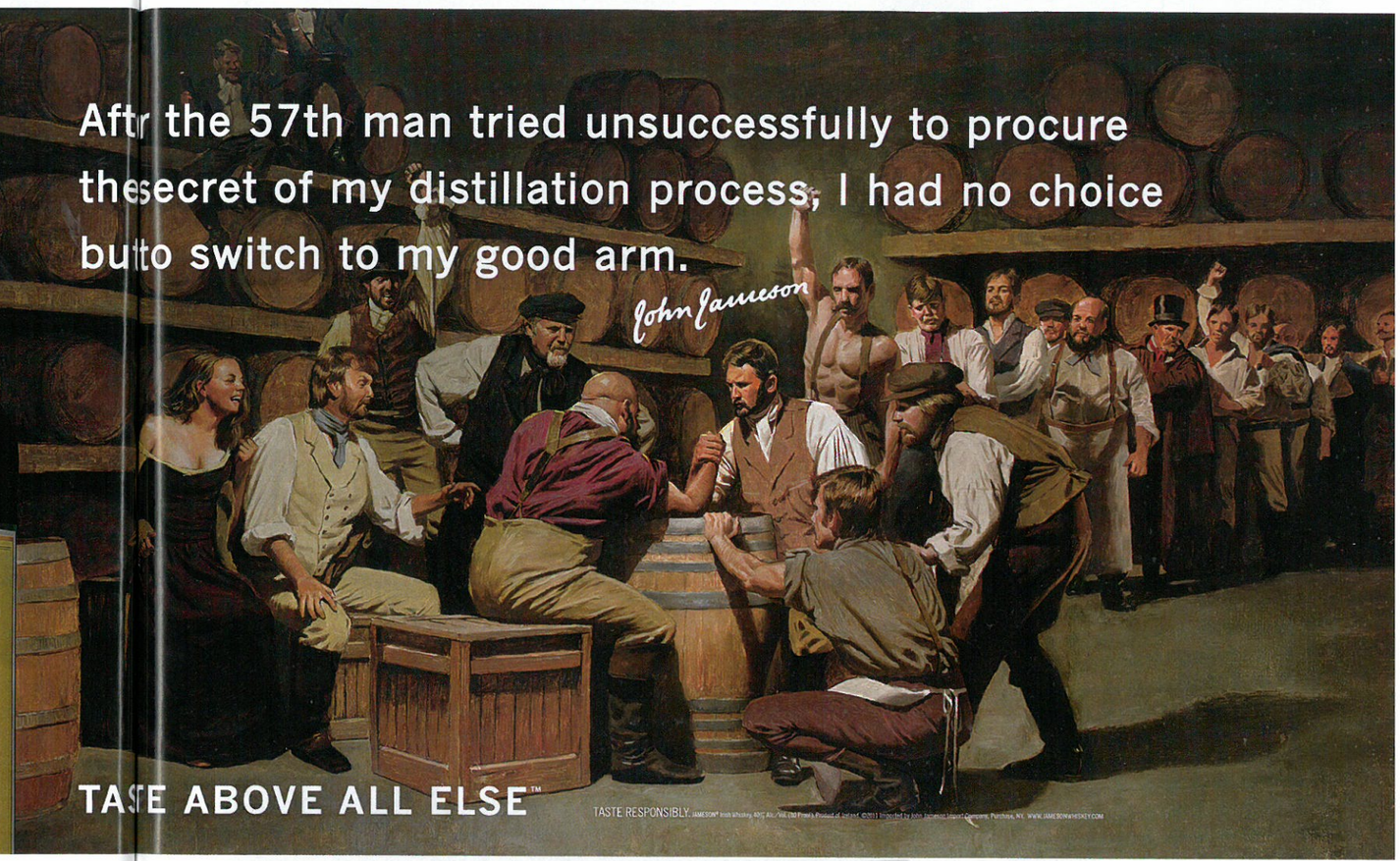
Jameson Whiskey Commission

by Warren Chang

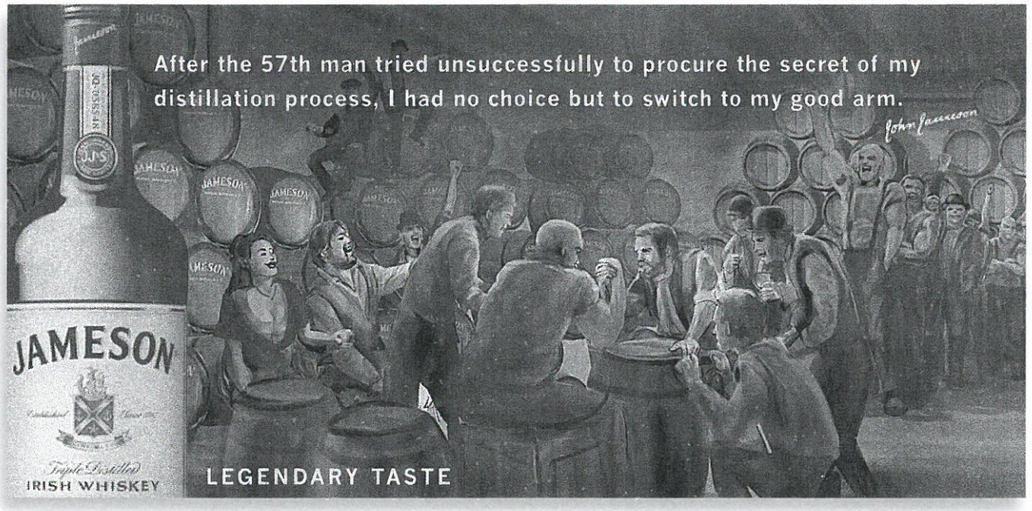
My adventure in Illustration

In the summer of 2011 I was commissioned by a New York advertising agency to complete a painting for Jameson Irish Whiskey. This marked the first commercial illustration assignment I've accepted since my transition to fine art over 12 years ago! For me, the main difference between fine art and illustration, is illustration is executing other's ideas for usually commercial purposes, while fine art is expressing one's own ideas and feelings in art. So this was a departure from the norm for me, but I accepted because they were looking for a fine art painter, not an illustrator and the project sounded fun.

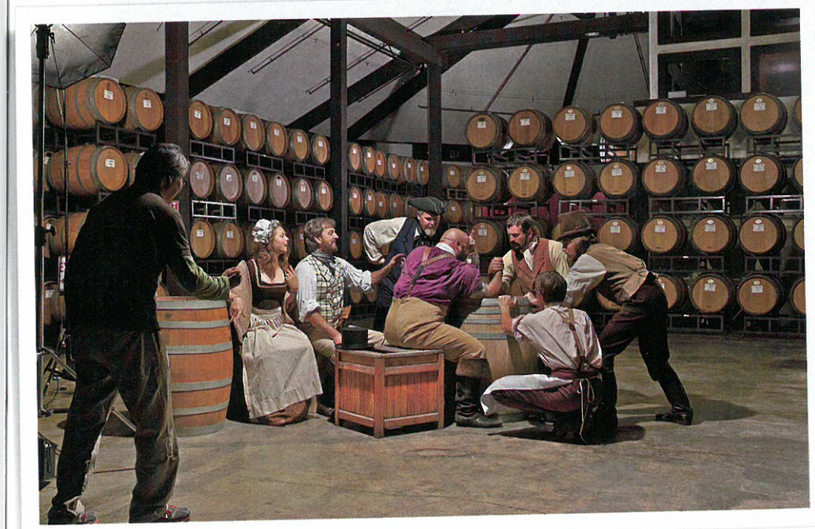
Their idea was for me to paint an 18th century inspired painting depicting founder John Jameson in an act of heroism to secure the safety of the secrets of his distillation process in making his treasured Irish Whiskey. The agency provided me with several concept marker comps, of which we decided on one (seen below), depicting John Jameson in the interior of a whiskey distillery in the midsts of an arm wrestling contest.



Concept marker sketch by Chris Scalf.



To give you an idea of the big production this was, the agency shelled out 11K for the photo shoot alone to provide me with the appropriate photographic reference material to paint from. This turned out to be the highlight of the project, as it was great fun to direct such a big production of actors and models in costume using the services of a professional photographer and equipment.



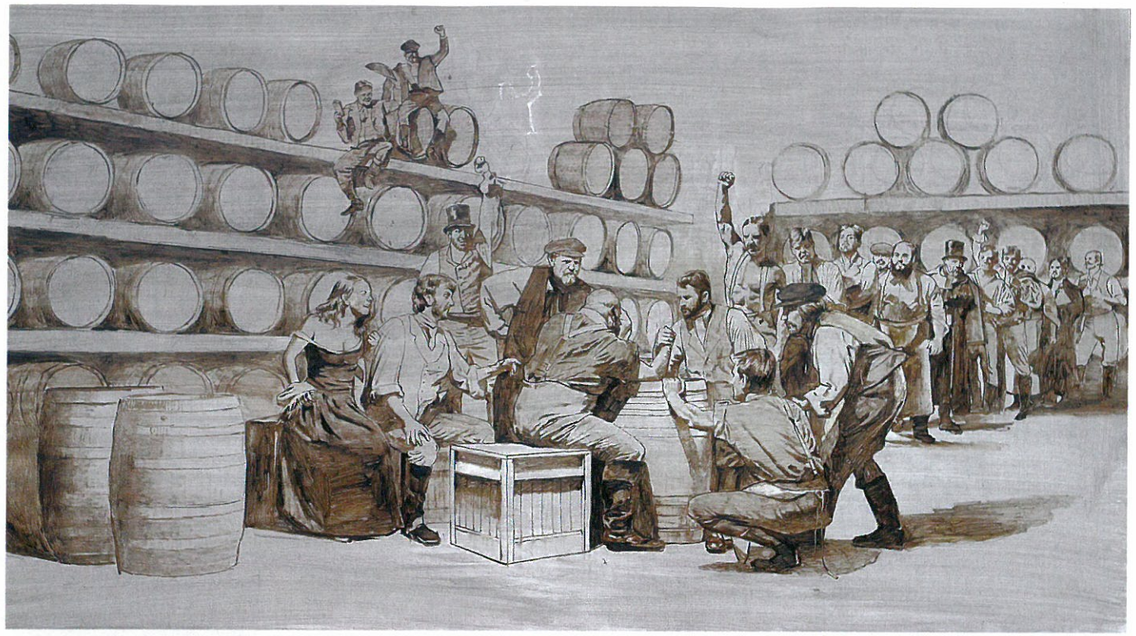
The process of developing their concept took 6 weeks, 3 weeks of revisions and changes. Difficult changes were requested, such as removing the apron and sleeves of our lone woman model, switching and removal of hats and implanting the face and likeness of the TV actor who portrayed John Jameson into the model we used, working from a screen shot off the TV screen!!! Somehow I managed to accommodate them and the following images show a step by step from final sketch to final art.

After completion and approval of the underpainting, I painted 22 consecutive days and nights (including weekends) to complete the painting on deadline. My wife wisely took the children out for two consecutive camping trips to steer clear of my work frenzy.

That's me playing Director on the far left in shadow, and not aware I was in the picture frame!

Preliminary sketch, black and white pencil on gray matte board. This sketch was developed over 6 weeks, 3 weeks of revision and changes, so numerous versions of this sketch were provided before final approval was given to proceed to canvas and paint.

I completed a small color study (6 x 9") This was just for me, not submitted to the client. I usually paint a color study for any major size painting, in order to work out the color and feel for the final painting. In this case, in keeping with the look of an 18th century painting, I kept the palette limited to mostly browns and grays, almost monochromatic, to capture the spirit of this historical painting and lend a sense of time passed.

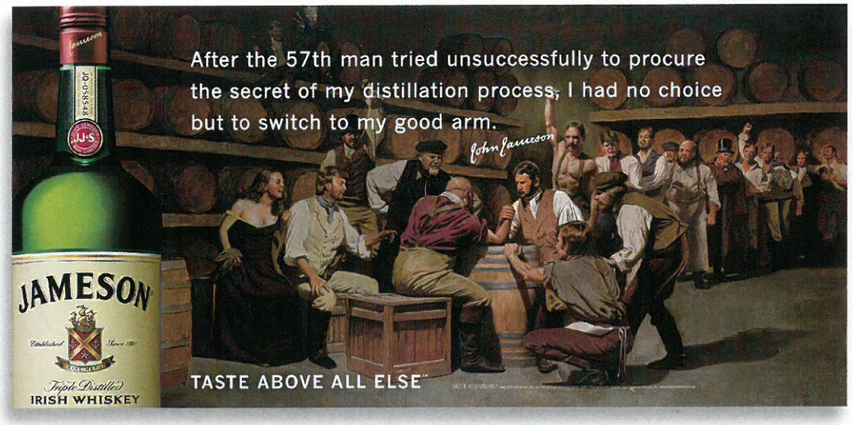


Underpainting or drawing in raw umber, 34 x 62" oil on canvas. I was asked to submit this underpainting which established the entire layout and drawing. All the drawing and composition was resolved at this point. This was approved, and the client at this point, felt confident and secure the project was on track to achieve their vision.

Painting in Progress During the painting of my project, the agency requested they see the work right away. As most artists I felt uncomfortable showing the work unfinished, however they insisted, and I had a photograph of the art taken while in progress. The challenge at this point, was to paint all the individual figures but still retaining a sense of unity of the figures appearing more as a group, rather than separate and individually. The darks or shadows was the key in achieving this. The darks and shadows act as the unifying agents in both color and value.

The painting is finished on deadline 34 x 62" oil on canvas, 2011.

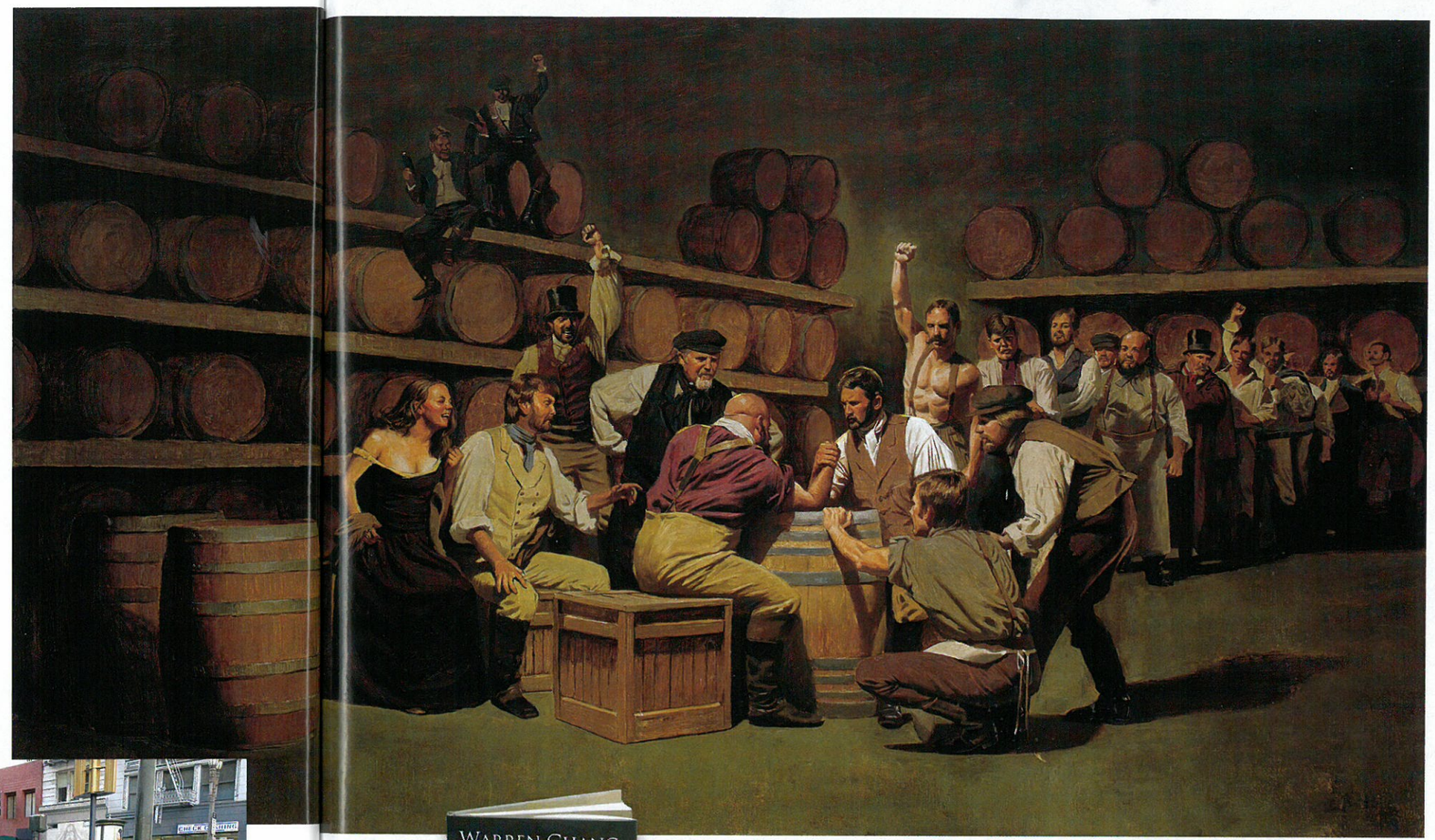
The client wanted the focal point of John Jameson and his bald opponent to be the main focus. They asked to have them lit more strongly, as if lit from directly above, so I added a yellow rim light on them to enhance their presence. I than diminished the light gradually as areas receded from this focal point, something you might observe in the work of Rembrandt, a spot light effect.

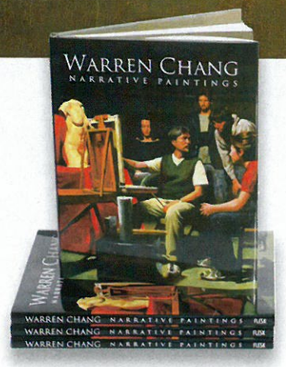


Final Layout Design This layout was used on the subways of New York City and various displays in San Francisco and Paris, France. If you notice in the final painting, I left the top area very dark, even the background figures, fully aware that a light type would be super imposed on the top. The left side also was left mostly barren, awaiting the placement of the product bottle in the final layout.

Below are pictures of my painting ad on the subways of New York City. They are also showing up in San Francisco.

PHOTOS COURTESY JAMES CHANG





WARREN CHANG: NARRATIVE PAINTINGS
by Warren Chang

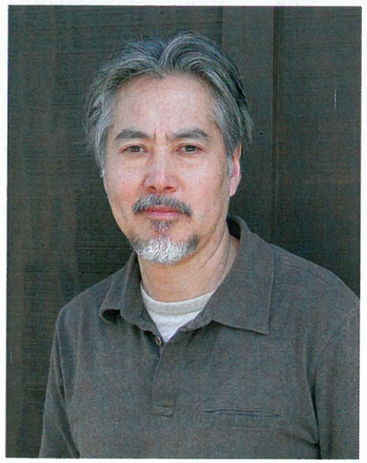
Available only through Flesk Publications,
www.fleskpublications.com

Introduction by Thomas Valenti
Appreciation by Max Ginsburg
Essay by Steve Hauk

100 images, 112 pages, 8.5 x 11 in.
Hardbound with jacket
ISBN: 978-1-933865-43-0

about the artist:

Born and bred in Monterey, California (USA) Warren Chang is an acclaimed realist artist whose figurative work focuses on biographical interiors influenced by the old Masters and the outdoor subjects of the fieldworkers of Monterey County. His work has won many awards and has been profiled in many national publications, most recently he is the subject of a 112 monograph book on his work, published by Flesk Publications in 2012. website: **www.warrenchang.com**

Gallery Representation:
Winfield Gallery,
Dolores Street, Carmel, CA 93921
www.winfieldgallery.com

Hauk Fine Arts,
206 Fountain Avenue, Pacific Grove, CA 93950
www.haukfinearts.com