2019 Artist of the Year: Karen Bowers

Karen’s passion for painting began as a child living in New York close to the Atlantic Ocean. She painted beach scenes with poster paint applied with big brushes. Watercolor was her primary medium of choice and remains so to this day.

During graduate work at UC Berkeley in Political Thought and her day job careers in politics, government and and land use/environmental policy analysis, Karen took painting and drawing classes. She attended SF Art Institute, Sacramento City College, College of the Redwoods and international workshops with renowned teachers.

In 1980, Karen was one of the founding members of San Francisco Watercolor Society. The group consisted of architects, planners & engineers who were committed to memorializing the history of places that were slated for demolition or renovation. They painted & exhibited in San Francisco and in the greater Bay Area.

Over time, Karen developed her unique watercolor style of “wet on wet” paint application, using big flat brushes and bold strokes. The power of the sea and the soft atmosphere of coastal weather inspires much of her water media painting techniques.

Known for abstract interpretations of the Mendocino coast and California landscapes, Karen’s paintings have earned national and regional awards. While an Artist in Resident at Yosemite National Park, Karen’s piece “Monument” won Honorable Mention and People’s Choice Awards at the Yosemite Renaissance exhibit at the Park’s Museum Gallery.

Her work has been collected throughout the country and internationally. This year, several pieces of Karen’s work will be shown in Japan through the Omachi-Miasa-Mendocino International Art Exchange.

Since moving to the Coast in 1999, Karen has been working as a volunteer on several community boards including Symphony of the Redwoods, Mendocino Art Center, and Mendocino Land Trust. Her love of nature and the environment are at the heart of her work.

Soft Day on the Coast, my painting for Winesong is in many ways a culmination, to date, of a series evocative of the atmospheric mood and changing scenes at Navarro Beach. While I cannot see the beach proper from my Navarro Ridge home and studio, I can feel it. When the white billowing fog creeps up the road and settles in the southern view across to the next ridge over the river, I know the beach is with me.

I am moved to paint in misty weather. My wet on wet approach to watercolor does well in this context. I rely on the paint not drying so I can continue to move it and shape the scene as it moves me. The soft edges, light and colors of a foggy environment are at the heart of this series.

Some of these paintings and all of the ideas for them were generated on location at Navarro Beach. Something about the consistency of constant change, renewal and restoration going on there calls me to paint. The place is both awesome, monumental and near. I hope Soft Day on the Coast conveys to the viewer the positive feelings that were the ingredients of its production.
Locally, her paintings are shown at the Artists Cooperative of Mendocino and exhibits with Mendocino Eco Artists. For over 12 years, Karen has taught watercolor technique workshops at Mendocino Art Center, Gualala Arts and in her studio.

If you are interested in a painting workshop, please contact Karen through her website.

www.karenbowersstudio.com