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WILLAMETTE VALLEY *Life*

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CRAFT SPIRITS

April Waters

INTERVIEW BY RANDY HILL



Rockwater, Opal Creek

Oregon fine artist April Waters, holds a bachelor's degree in fine arts from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and she did further study at the Art Center School of Design in Los Angeles and California State University at Fullerton. She has been featured in numerous solo and group exhibitions over the past 20 years and is included in public and private collections in California and Oregon, including those at Oregon State University, Mt.

Angel Abbey and Salem Hospital, among many others.

Artist Statement:

Water, with its qualities of reflection, transparency, movement and life generation, has been the focus of my painting for decades. These qualities became evident in my Willamette River paintings, works that began as an aerial exploration of the beauty of the region and evolved into studies of the movement of the river and its dance with the land through which it flows.

Recently, I began painting in a new studio in Neskowin, Oregon. Watching the changes in sky and sea while I paint, and listening to the constant ocean and bird sounds, inspires and energizes me.

As I focused my painting on the rivers, creeks, estuaries and coastlines of the Northwest, I became interested in water in a larger context. My series of paintings of Dr. Helen Caldicott, Dr. Wangari Maathai, Dr. Vandana Shiva and Maude Barlow are of women who are working to protect the watersheds of the world and assure that water remains in the "commons", for all people. Whether it is water itself, or a "Shero" who protect it, I am painting to explore, be in nature and the pure joy of applying paint to canvas.



Willamette Valley In Bloom

Tell our readers a bit about your background. Were you always drawn to art?

Yes. I was always making things, and when I was 15 my parents gave me an easel, paints and a canvas. I painted outside that day, a view from the hills out to the ocean. Art and painting have been my passion ever since.

When did you first realize that you were an artist?

Ever since I painted that first landscape. I kept taking classes and eventually received my Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Colorado, Boulder. I didn't know whether I could make a living as an artist, so since I love science, I also got a degree in nursing to support myself and my family. For many years I painted part time and I worked as a registered nurse part time. Shortly after moving to Oregon, 20 years ago, I committed to being a full-time artist.

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Sand Lake Estuary, Oregon

I go to my sources of inspiration and paint from life. It is invigorating for me to paint by the side of a creek or river. It awakens all the senses.

What's your favorite medium to work in?

I started with oil painting, and although I have painted in watercolors, pastels and acrylics, oil has all the best qualities for the work I do. Its fluidity, vibrancy and buttery quality are a pleasure to paint with and it has been used by the masters for centuries.

What famous artists have influenced you and how?

Claude Monet and David Hockney. Experiencing Monet's wall-sized paintings in the Musee de l'Orangerie in Paris was particularly moving. I love the texture, color and insightfulness of his paintings. I have followed Hockney's work for years and had the opportunity to see his retrospective at the DeYoung Museum of Art in San Francisco earlier this year. He is a master of art history and exceptionally innovative. Both have superb "sight."

What do you do for fun (besides painting)?

I like to kayak and walk near and in creeks, rivers and estuaries. The Salmon River Estuary, the Metolius River and Opal Creek are my favorites. I enjoy family, friends and travel.

What inspires you to create art?

The sky, water and drama of nature. I enjoy the sense of discovery that comes from looking closely at nature, water specifically. People who have devoted their lives to environmental causes also inspire me. I have painted large scale (80-by-60-inch) portraits of many contemporary women leaders who

have worked for environmental causes, the "sheroes." They have been exhibited in Salem, Portland and Eugene.

How do you keep motivated when things get rough in the studio?

I go to my sources of inspiration and paint from life. It is invigorating for me to paint by the side of a creek or river. It awakens all the senses. I also go to see what the artists I'm inspired by are doing, like the Hockney exhibit.

How have you handled the business side of being an artist?

I usually do commissions and sell directly to my clients. I enjoy a personal connection with the people who purchase my paintings.

Where can folks see your art?

My website is aprilwaters.com. My next show will be at the Bush Art Gallery in Salem, September 2015. Several of my paintings and prints are on display to the public at Salem Hospital, Advantis Medical Center in Portland, Slocum Orthopedic Clinic in Eugene, Hope Orthopedic Clinic in Salem, and the Lobby of Collier Law in Salem.

The painting, "Water Reaching for Itself, Willamette Flood #3," Oregon Artist Series, Northwest Art from the Collection of the Hallie Ford Art Museum (as part of the Collection of the Hallie Ford Museum) is at the Salem Conference Center where it is on display until the end of this year. **W**

To view more of April's art, visit: aprilwaters.com

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