

Colorful Layers

Encaustic artist Marc Kundmann creates rich paintings with pigmented hot wax

By Debra Lawless

When we think of fine art, pancake griddle, blowtorch and beeswax aren't exactly the words that come to mind. Yet these are precisely the tools encaustic painter Marc Kundmann uses to create his vibrant paintings.

Working during the morning in a light-filled studio on Bradford Street in Provincetown's West End, Kundmann, 52, paints with pigmented hot wax in a technique that creates rich paintings with a texture you can touch and see.

"Something about the way the light hits the wax makes it glow," he says.

Encaustic is a Greek word meaning "to burn in," and it is a process that may have begun in the fifth century B.C. Later in Egypt, encaustic funeral portraits were placed on mummies.

In the past decade or so, painters have rediscovered encaustic crafts. The Truro Center for the Arts at Castle Hill will host its ninth international conference on the medium in early June and the Provincetown Art Association Museum offers workshops.

Instead of a canvas, Kundmann begins with a hard birch panel. He sketches a light image in charcoal, then brushes on a layer of clear molten wax mixed with Damar resin. The resin raises the wax's melting point and makes the painting very durable. Next, he flakes oil sticks into individual pots of wax to create his colors. A griddle keeps the wax liquid and doubles as a palette. Unlike some encaustic artists, Kundmann works with the panel held vertically. "Painting on wood, it has a bit of tooth," he says. As he builds up the layers



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of colored wax on the panel, he gives the work-in-progress a few blasts of a propane blowtorch that makes the wax run and fuses each layer to the one below. Every scrape of a palette knife reveals the various colors of previous layers of wax. He also carves into the wax to create texture. The "immediacy" of encaustic painting, which he turned to in 2006, appeals to Kundmann. "When I was an oil painter, I tended to overwork stuff," he says. "The painting would get mushy. I'm not a very patient person. I can layer with wax, but quickly."

And oh, the colors! "Posse" is a pair of 20-by-16-inch canvases depicting five men walking on a street. Kundmann's palette in these particular paintings includes a deep terracotta orange that shows up on some of the men's legs and bare backs. The long shadows of an endless summer afternoon stretch along the asphalt.

Provincetown's light has been famous for more than 100 years, since the painter Charles Webster Hawthorne first came to Provincetown in 1899 and established the art colony. Hawthorne was struck by what

he dubbed "a jumble of color in the intense sunlight."

"The light out here gives you the license to be dramatic," says Kundmann, who was born in Chicago and lived in Minneapolis until 1997. "You just witness some things—some combination of color and light. It seems unreal."

You can learn to paint so easily here."

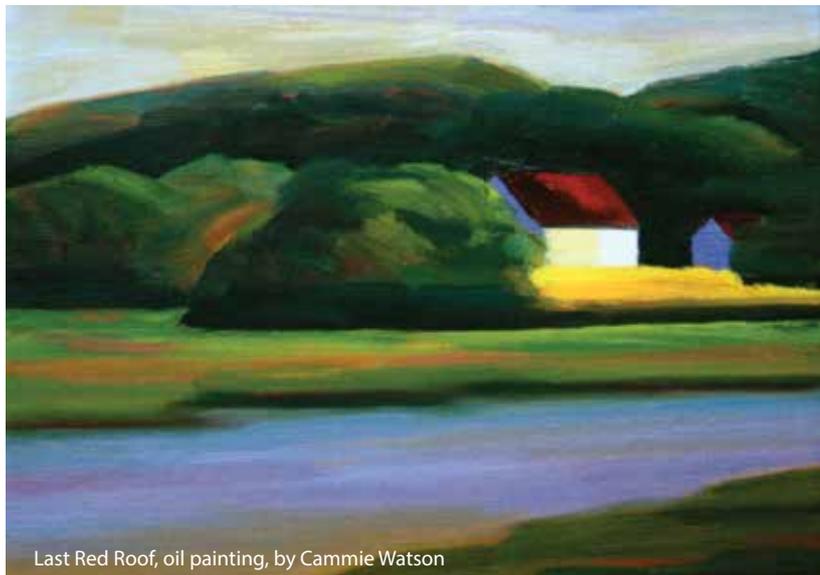
In Provincetown, Kundmann has studied with, among others, Robert Henry, who himself studied with the famous abstract expressionist Hans Hofmann for three years in the mid-20th

During his nearly 20 years here, Kundmann's art has evolved. He began as a plein air artist, and early on painted solitary figures and boarded-up houses. Kundmann often uses small boats and houses to stand in for people. In "Three's a Charm," three dinghies line up along a shore. What is their relationship to one another? Are they children? Two parents and a child? A love triangle?

"Humans are amazing," he says. "There's something mystical; you always want to know more."

Celebrating Edward Hopper's Legacy On Cape Cod

The Cape Cod Museum of Art and artists from across the country are joining with the Addison Art Gallery and other local organizations and businesses for "After Hopper," a celebration of work by contemporary artists inspired by Edward Hopper and Cape Cod. Plans for this celebration include exhibitions of new plein air and studio works, receptions, demonstrations, artist panels, and talks by Hopper experts in 2015 and 2016.



Last Red Roof, oil painting, by Cammie Watson

JULY 13-JULY 17

After Hopper: Painting Hopper's Places en Plein Air, Orleans to Provincetown

Artists from across the country will be painting at various locations of their choosing, creating their own interpretations of scenes and the region that compelled this great American painter.

AUG. 1, 5-7 P.M.

After Hopper: Plein Air Artists' Gallery Reception

Addison Art Gallery 43 South Orleans Road (Route 28), Orleans
Opening reception for the first "After Hopper" exhibition featuring work created by award-winning artists from across the country.

AUG. 29-NOV. 15

After Hopper: Plein Air Museum Exhibition

Cape Cod Museum of Art
60 Hope Lane (off 6A), Dennis

SEPT. 3, 3 P.M.

After Hopper: Philip Koch Slide Talk

Cape Cod Museum of Art
60 Hope Lane (off 6A), Dennis

SEPT. 3, 5:30-7 P.M.

After Hopper: Plein Air Museum Exhibition Opening Reception

Cape Cod Museum of Art
60 Hope Lane (off 6A), Dennis

SEPT. 19 AT 1 P.M.

After Hopper: Plein Air Painting Demonstrations

Cape Cod Museum of Art
60 Hope Lane (off 6A), Dennis

OCT. 11, 2 P.M.

After Hopper: Artists Panel

Cape Cod Museum of Art
60 Hope Lane (off 6A), Dennis

Additional events listed at www.addisonart.com/AfterHopper/default.html and www.facebook.com/addisonartgallery/events as they are scheduled.



Helen Addison, standing in front of "Blue Sky," oil on canvas by Cleber Stecei.

The Addison Gallery in Orleans celebrates 20 years

Q. *Describe your early beginnings. Was it difficult opening a gallery? Or did it come naturally to you?*

A. I gathered information on running a gallery by reading books, attending seminars and shows in New York City and Boston, listening to experienced artists, and drew on my own experience as a collector. The gallery business is primarily a marketing business. Having studied marketing at Cornell and with decades of experience (including for the Cape Cod School of Art and the Provincetown Art Association and Museum), I had a relevant base of knowledge.

Q. *How many artists do you represent?*

A. About 30 artists on a regular basis, and dozens of other artists join us for our special events. We have artists from across the country, France and Mexico. About half are from this region. We choose artists that create work appealing to our collectors. Our artists are all

positive, approachable, and professional.

Q. *What is the best part about owning a gallery?*

A. Meeting and getting to know so many art lovers and artists. And, of course, it's a lovely environment in which to work.

Q. *What changes in artwork have you seen over the years? Any new or interesting trends happening now?*

A. The rebirth of popularity of encaustic painting. Black and floating frames, and gallery wraps instead of traditional gold-toned frames.

Q. *Any special celebrations for your 20th anniversary?*

A. We'll have a party on Saturday, Nov. 28, the anniversary of our first opening reception.

Q. *What would you say to someone who might be intimidated to walk into your gallery?*

A. Everyone is welcome to visit the gallery—to just look around or to chat with us and learn more about the art—and to join us for our special events. These are great opportunities to meet artists and get a better understanding of their techniques and inspirations. We're happy to have children explore the gallery rooms and enjoy helping them get a close-up look at the sculpture and paintings. Our plein air events and demonstrations are casual occasions for meeting artists and watching them work.

Q. *What is the key to owning a successful gallery and for staying in business 20 years?*

A. Choosing the right art for one's market. Working with professional artists. Appreciating the collectors. Doing business with integrity. Presenting creative ways to introduce art and artists to the local, regional and national market. Making a serious financial investment in promoting the artists one represents. In addition to our strong commitment to national advertising, we have a solid history of presenting intriguing events and partnering with the community.

Q. *Where have you presented exhibitions and held receptions?*

A. Everywhere from Provincetown to Falmouth. I've worked with Highfield Hall, the Cape Cod Museum of Art, the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, French Cable Station Museum, Orleans Historical Society, Cape Cod National Seashore, Truro Public Library, Wellfleet Public Library, WOMR, Orleans Improvement Association, Orleans Conservation Trust, and other businesses. Cape Cod is the home of our country's oldest, continuously operating art colony; the place where Edward Hopper, one of America's greatest painters, chose to build his home; an internationally renowned vacation destination. It is truly a privilege to live and work in a community with this rich artistic heritage, vibrant contemporary art scene, and where one knows and cares about their neighbors.