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FOR THE LOVE OF THE LAND

By Vicki Stavig

Waves pounding the shore, trees bending wistfully in the breeze, flowers glowing in the misty morning light—these are just some of the scenes that captivate and inspire landscape painters. Using a variety of mediums and styles, they pay homage to the diversity and beauty of nature.

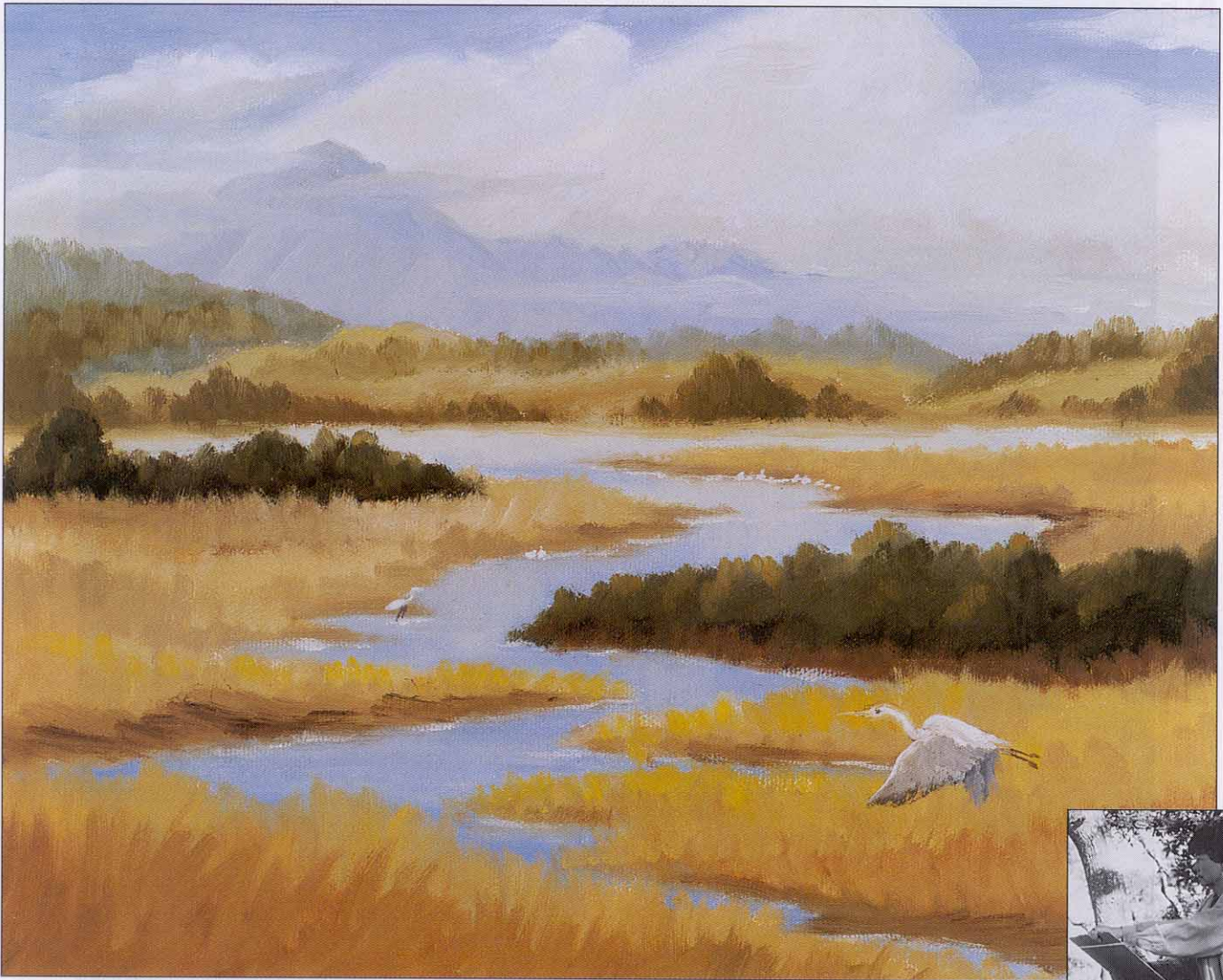
For these artists, landscape painting is indeed a labor of love. Often fighting the elements, they persevere, driven by the need to capture nature at its best. The results of their efforts are intriguing and glorious artworks that evoke a myriad of emotions, as well as a reverence for the natural wonders of the world around us. A well-done landscape painting envelops the senses. You can almost feel the breeze, smell the flowers, or reach out and touch the graceful eucalyptus.

For many, Mother Nature might be most evident in potted plants on the rooftops of 46-story buildings or in a passing image while driving congested freeway systems to and from jobs that drain the human spirit in the name of financial security. A good landscape painter can transport us from the drudgery of everyday life to the wonder of a forest or the peacefulness of a stream meandering through a meadow.

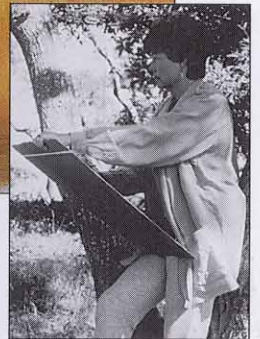
We invite you to spend a few moments escaping to another world, where life is simple and beauty abounds. Kick off your shoes, get comfortable, turn the page, and let 12 talented artists take you on a tour of the California landscape.

Vicki Stavig is editor of Art of the West.

Near Hamlet's Castle by Martha Saudek



Lunchtime, oil, 12" by 16"



ZENAIDA MOTT

“I hope I convey the love I feel for these special places and the excitement I felt in viewing them. So much of the land is disappearing because of development that I want to record and preserve as much of it as possible.” So says Zee Zee Mott of the paintings she creates of the California landscape, an endeavor that she finds personally and professionally fulfilling.

Growing up in Berkeley, California, Mott earned a degree in history and French from the University of California, then spent a few years teaching at a girls' college in Nigeria, where Maria Sanchez, the wife of the Mexican consul, taught her to paint. Her initial subjects were landscapes, wildlife, and local people. After returning to the United States for a time, while Mott's husband, Bill, taught at MIT, the couple then lived in Japan for almost four years, where Mott continued to paint landscapes, as well as the local architecture.

In the early '70s, the couple returned to the United States, this time for good, and Mott enrolled in workshops taught by a variety of artists, including John Budicin and John Seery Lester. Her paintings had been selling well in Africa and in Japan and soon earned a growing following here, as well.

“I mainly concentrate on the Western landscape because of its beauty and diversity,” Mott says. “We have a remote cabin in the Sierras, which is my studio in the summer and I also love the wine country, the desert, and the coast. I hope I convey some of the love I feel for these special places and the excitement I felt in viewing them, particularly the dramatic light of early morning or late afternoon or after a storm.”

Living and painting north of San Francisco, Mott is a member of the BayWood Artists, a group of artists who are working together to preserve the open spaces of Marin County and the great Bay area of San Francisco. To say that she is passionate about the California landscape would be an understatement. “I try to get out and paint almost every day,” she says. “This area is endlessly interesting.”