

The Portrait Society of America

Chairman's Letter

Selling is Not “Selling Out”

The summer heat is unmerciful as it beats down and the minutes tick away while you sit powerlessly caught in a traffic gridlock that threatens to kill your reputation for never missing an important appointment. These constant stresses and pressures of everyday life have finally worn down your resilience and you can no longer stoke the creative fire within. If only you could step away from all of this and find a place where your only task would be to soak in and enjoy the fullness of each day.

This exact desire struck my young wife and I several years ago right after finishing a series of tight commission deadlines. We both found ourselves so worn down that our daydream-y wistful want to “get away” grew rather quickly into a desperate need to “get away.” We did the only sensible thing: we packed the car and headed south. As Florida natives, we knew where we could cross the line from normal to exotic, and it is at the southern end of Miami’s Biscayne Bay. There begins a string of tropical pearls tied together by the elevated Overseas Highway that will lead you to the edge of Key West, the island city with a well-earned “Margaritaville” party reputation. Perfect!

Here you can stroll beautiful sun-dappled cobblestone streets lined with pastel painted houses that present a distinctive Bahamian style. The only sounds will be the gentle rustling of the coconut palms by the constant ocean breezes. The salt-filled air is heavy with the fragrance of a variety of the island’s blossoms, and you might even catch the occasional whiff of an authentic Cuban meal being cooked as you pass the opened back door of a kitchen. The island holds tightly onto to its culinary heritage that is a unique blend of both Cuban and Bahamian styles tied closely to the ocean’s offerings.

For 200 years, these islands have held an



allure that has beckoned all manners of artists, writers, sportsmen, celebrities and politicians. Ernest Hemingway, Tennessee Williams, Winslow Homer, Jimmy Buffet, Harry Truman—on and on the list could go—and all are seeking a similar experience, a simple “timeout” from life.

While considering the rich subject potential that the island offered, Chris and I crossed Mallory Square toward Sunset Pier when we came upon the real reason for this letter. Here was the typical sidewalk portrait artist setup but without the artist. Under a giant sun-shielding umbrella was an easel, a chair for the subject and a chair for the artist, a box with its pastels arranged in an orderly color family grouping, and a drawing board covered with a cushion of light gray pastel paper. This was the totality of this artist’s arrangement with the exception that on the front of the easel was clipped a white cardboard sign with black lettering that read “PASTEL PORTRAITS, \$35.”

I asked around for the artist and was told he

had been here all day with not one customer so he took off for an early dinner. What jumped out to me was that there were no examples of the artist’s actual portrait work. In all fairness, the artist may have carried a portfolio that could be shown to clients, but to the casual observer walking past the stand, the only thing they could see was that a portrait was going to cost you \$35. There was no visual evidence to confirm it would be worth the expense. This artist wasn’t selling a portrait, they were selling a price; it’s no wonder there weren’t any takers.

There is a relationship between price and perceived artwork, which could lead us to ask, “What is the real value of artwork?” But establishing the value of any product is based on two key factors, need/desire and availability. This is what is known as “selling” in the business world. To some artists marketing or selling are bad words, but this not “selling out,” “going commercial” or “prostituting” your art. You

will need to afford to continue your art career and although many artists freeze up and resist anything that smacks of business; if you are a creative person, I encourage you to take that self-image into the business world. Because really, all business is about one thing: selling.

A simple explanation of the steps or phases of all selling experiences are:

STEP 1. IDENTIFY A NEED

Potential clients process information and interest through stimuli, which in the art world usually occurs as a visual exposure. Our needs can be a functional or emotional desire for a product or service and either can be equally strong.

STEP 2. FEED THE NEED WITH KNOWLEDGE

Offering information on your creative process not only educates but connects and will heighten their interest. Including information about the high quality of the painting or drawing materials

you have selected, which ensures maximum permanence, is valuable as well as how long you have worked and studied to develop your skills. You are selling yourself as well as a product and even if they don't purchase, they will remember the interaction and may act on it at a later date.

STEP 3. PROVIDE THIRD-PARTY ENDORSEMENTS

Removing the "risk" in any transaction is a critical step and showing the quality of work will go a long way. But sharing any thank you notes or testimonials will ease fears and bring comforting anticipation to the client.

STEP 4. SETTING THE PRICE POINT

In setting a price, do your research with comparables based on your selling history. And a very important factor to allay any fears of risk is to include a "satisfaction guarantee," within a reasonable time limit.

STEP 5. POST PURCHASE BEHAVIOR

Have a recent or potential customer provide their comments about their experience and contact information on a card that you provide, with the promise of sending them news about future shows or seasonal specials you may be planning. Assembling a client following through constant communication is key to potential future transactions and brand loyalty.

I encourage you to incorporate some of these steps into the business side of your art and see where it takes you—hopefully to a cabana in Key West!



Edward Jonas,
Chairman

Portrait Society of America UPCOMING EVENTS & PROGRAMS

The Portrait Society of America has three upcoming events and two upcoming competitions. We invite you to participate either by attending an event or sharing your work.



Studio Incamminati Portrait Academy

October 6-7, 2017, featuring Quang Ho, Adrienne Stein, Alexandra Tyng and Lea Wight



Townsend Atelier Portrait Academy

October 27-28, 2017, featuring Michelle Dunaway, Marc Chatov, Seth Hauckamp and Dawn Whitelaw

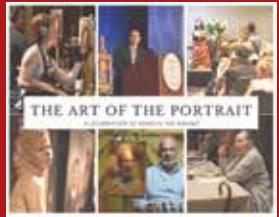


Members Only Competition - Entry Deadline November 2, 2017

Recognizing Portrait Society members' artwork in five categories: Commissioned Portrait, Non-Commissioned Portrait, Outside the Box, Still-life and Self-Portrait



International Portrait Competition - Entry Deadline February 22, 2018
Showcasing the very best in fine art portraiture and figurative work



20th Anniversary The Art of the Portrait
A portrait and figurative artists' conference two decades in the making
April 19-22, 2018, Washington, DC

DAVID KASSAN

Painting a Link to the Past

By Christine Egnoski

You could feel the level of excitement and anticipation at the 19th annual *The Art of the Portrait* awards ceremony as David Kassan's name was announced as the winner of the Draper Grand Prize. David was welcomed to the stage with a standing ovation. Selected from over 2,100 entries, David's painting titled *Love and Resilience* is a portrait of Louise and Lazar Farkas and inspired by their story of love and survival. It is the latest in a series of paintings of Shoah Survivors that has changed the course of how David thinks about life and his art.

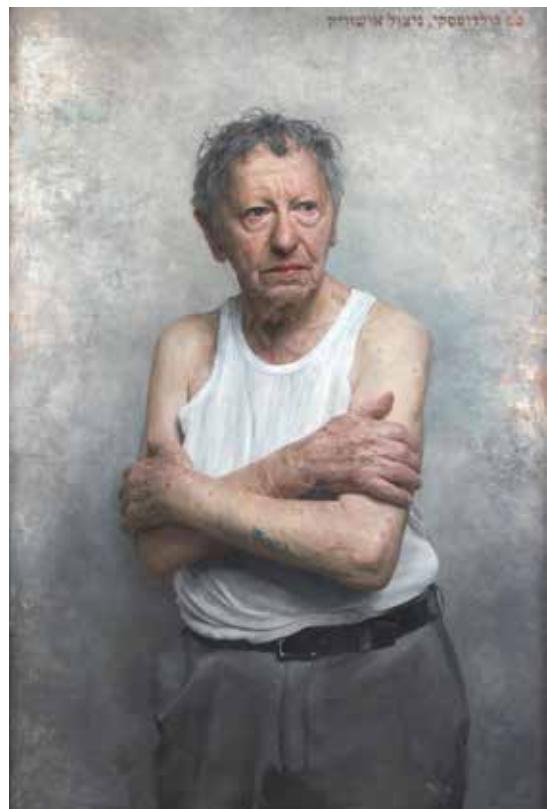
Upon accepting the award, David said, "Thank you so much Portrait Society of America...This

was definitely a dream for me, and I share these awards with the survivors, whom have all shared their sometimes painful, but mostly glorious and inspiring lives with me."

Louise's story began in Northern Romania where her parents led a comfortable middle class life producing dairy products and running a store. Lazar spent his youth across the border in Czechoslovakia where he attended business school and then worked in a wholesale grocery business. For a while, the borders between Romania and Czechoslovakia were open, and Lazar would cross over to socialize, talking over coffee and walking the sidewalks with a group

of young women, one of whom was Louise.

As anti-Semitism in German-occupied countries grew, Lazar was pressed into forced labor. Working from early morning to late night, he helped build bunkers. Louise was about 20 when she was deported to Auschwitz: "A woman that was in power at the time liked my shoes," says Louise, "and she took them and I had no shoes. I was barefoot. It was cold... we struggled." Louise lost her parents and three of her siblings. But the tides were turning against Germany and security was unraveling. "We walked out of the camp. Just simply," says Louise of her and her sister's escape. "We had no



Far left: *Portrait of Sam Goldofsky, Survivor of Auschwitz*, oil on aluminum, 41 x 27" (104 x 69 cm)

Left: *Elsa Ross, Hidden Child*, oil on panel, 30 x 20" (76 x 51 cm)

Opposite page:
Love and Resilience, Portrait of Louise and Lazar Farkas, oil on panel, 46 x 42" (117 x 107 cm)



"Something I have always sought out and have found in this series is to paint with more empathy, to really care for the subject that I portray. It has been such a privilege to be invited into their lives."

—David Kassan

THE ART OF THE PORTRAIT

place to go and no money and no food. We went from country to country from there."

Lazar also managed to run away from his forced labor. "I wound up somewhere in Poland, I don't know where," he says. He eventually volunteered with the Czechoslovakian army and ended up stationed in his hometown. He learned that people were escaping from the camps and wanted to look for Louise. Eventually, after several times of just missing each other, Lazar found Louise and the two were soon married. Lazar's uncle

was able to arrange for their immigration to the United States and they settled in Brooklyn where Lazar got a job in the grocery business.

Love and Resilience is one of several paintings David has completed of Shoah survivors. He is calling the project the *EDUT Project: Living Witnesses, Survivors of the Holocaust*. Edut is Hebrew for testimony. His first portrait of Auschwitz survivor Sam Goldofsky was selected from more than 2,500 entries to be part of the BP Portrait Award 2015 held annual at the National Portrait Gallery, London. A portrait of sisters,

Bella Sztul and Roslyn Goldofsky, whose mother hid them from the Nazis with the help of Catholic families, was completed last year. David says, "With the paintings I've completed so far of the survivors, I feel that I have a responsibility to not only represent them in the most authentic possible way, but also to document a deeper understanding of their lives and not just the horrors of what they witnessed early in their lives. My goal is to capture their resilience throughout their lives. This goal is a tall order for a painter."



Hand Study, studied for large work.



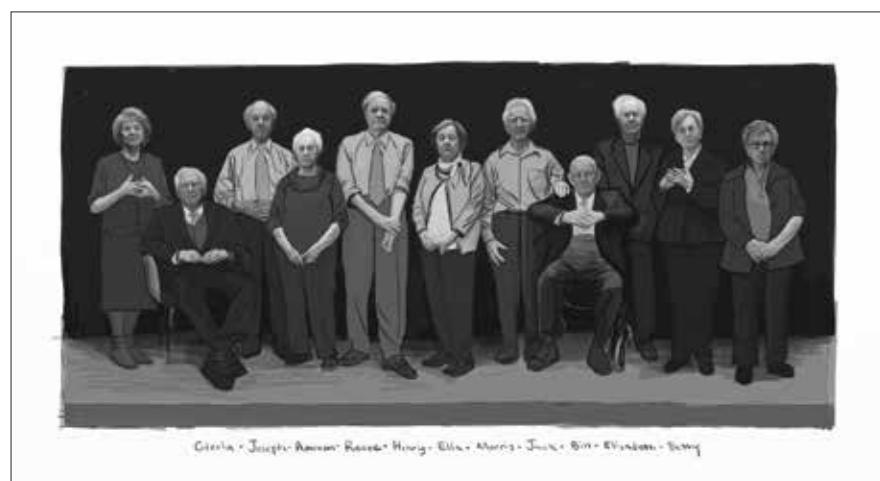
Hand Study, sketch of Renee's hands.

Twin Survivors of the Holocaust; Roslyn and Bella, oil on panel, 56 x 43" (142 x 109 cm)

Meeting with survivors of Auschwitz at the Museum of Tolerance. Photo by Andy Romanoff.

Always trying to improve and challenge himself with paintings that are of increasing complexity and importance, earlier this year he traveled with videographer Chloe Lee from New York City to Los Angeles to meet with 11 survivors of Auschwitz. His idea was to take his current series of paintings to the next level, so he is now working on a life-size representation of all 11 survivors. The finished painting, which will take approximately two years to complete, will be 18 feet long and 8 feet high and consist of five panels put together, a work that David hopes will be, "so large that it can't be ignored." David explains, "Chloe and I have been filming interviews with all of the survivors in the series in order to document their lives and inspiring words. We are also going to film each step of the process in the creation of this large painting in order to educate about the artistic journey as well as the journeys of the survivors." He is documenting the entire process on patreon.com/davidkassan.

Setting aside his gallery and commission



Digital painting thumbnail for composition purposes.

work, David has dedicated himself exclusively to the project. Plans are in place in the spring of 2019 for an opening, exhibition and catalog featuring the large work and drawing studies, as well as the film, at the Fisher Museum of Art. David's commitment to the project runs deep; he says, "These paintings represent the perseverance and the strength of the human spirit. I endeavor to respect and show the dignity of each survivor and tell his or her story."

David sees his role as a conduit: to listen with the painting and to document it in an intensely intimate way. He feels there are three components to each painting—the artist, the subject and the viewer—and he does not want his "painting ego" to get in the way of the viewer and the survivor. Each aspect of his work is in service to the accurate and honest representation of the survivor.

David also has a very personal connection to the project. In 1917, a young Murray Kassan

immigrated to the United States, escaping ethnic cleansing on the border of the Ukraine and Romania by the Cossacks. Murray was David's grandfather, and his story of survival is a vague unfocused legend in his family for many reasons. When his father was 15 years old, Murray was estranged from the family and his father never saw him again. He passed away when David was very little and he never got to meet him. His grandfather's story of survival is now only fragmented memories for David. "Painting for me is also my way of understanding the world around me, my way of connecting, and my excuse to interact and learn," he says. "In this project, it's my personal way of connecting to my grandfather's lost story. With every survivor's story that I hear and record into a painting, I feel that I move closer to the connection with my grandfather that I never had. My brush paints a link between us." 



Work in progress for one of the five panels for the large painting.

Master Showcase



Anna Rose Bain

A Fleeting Moment, oil on linen, 8 x 6" (20 x 15 cm)

INSPIRATION

The subject of this portrait is my 2-year-old daughter, Cecelia. She was dressed up for a special occasion but instead of mingling with the crowd, she wanted to be outside, exploring the surrounding neighborhood. I watched as she flitted like a butterfly from door to door, but for a split second, she stopped and stared off contemplatively. We are all told that these early years pass by in an instant. It was this concept, wrapped up in the immediacy of a single moment that I hoped to capture in the painting.

ARTISTIC PATH

I always knew that I was meant to become an artist. My childhood friends knew this too, and would often rope me into illustrating their “novels” or drawing pictures for them. I did my first commissioned portrait when I was 12 years old. I was motivated to draw and paint whenever I could. When I went to Hillsdale College and started formal art classes, I knew for sure that this was my calling and I haven’t looked back.



John Borowicz

Abby, oil, 40 x 30" (102 x 76 cm)

INSPIRATION

Last summer I was commissioned to paint a portrait of Abby, her cousin and their grandmother. On the day I went out to photograph them for source material, only Abby and her grandmother were there so I used the time to work out an idea for the final composition and get to know Abby. She was immediately comfortable in front of the camera and had a wonderful energy about her—at once confident and grounded but also sprightly and elusive—exactly the kind of magic combination I hope for when setting out to paint a portrait. I started this painting thinking of it as a study for the final portrait. In the end, though, I let it take me where it wanted to go and the result is a pleasant surprise.

ARTISTIC PATH

I studied painting at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and at the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth. I’ve been painting professionally since college. I am represented by Adam Baumgold Gallery in New York City and Dede Shattuck Gallery in Westport, Massachusetts.



Jennifer Welty

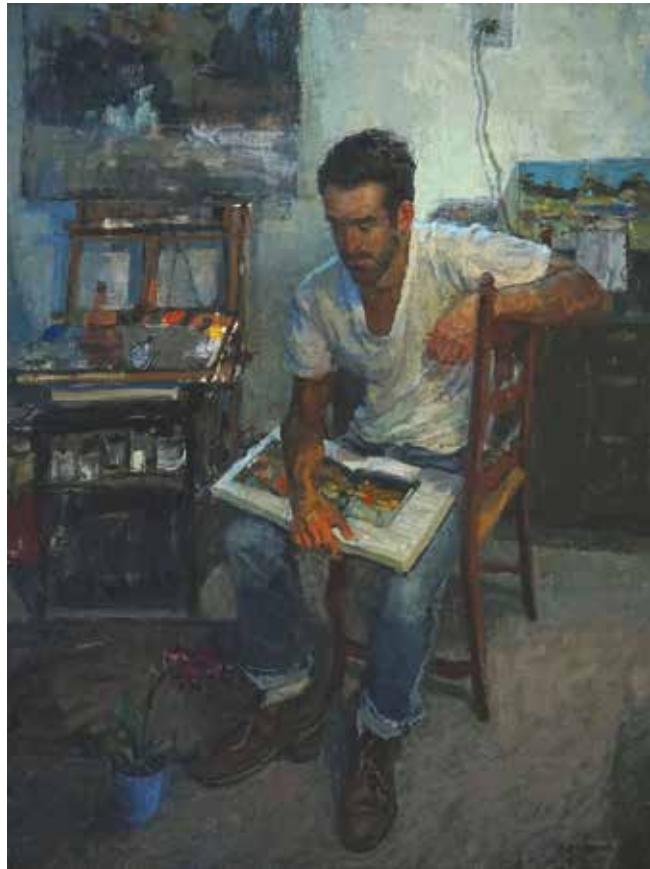
Presley, oil, 40 x 30" (102 x 76 cm)

INSPIRATION

My subject was a commissioned portrait of a little girl. My client had some parameters for me: she wanted a dark background and a sort of "old-fashioned" feel to the painting. As the artist, I felt it was my job to interpret those parameters through my own artistic filter, so I proposed a provocative stance and expression, different from those of most little girl's portraits, and her mother (bravely) agreed to my sketch proposal. I also love difficult lighting, and wanted the plain dark background to have "life" to it, so I had to play with how deep to make it, and how much to leave unfinished. I wanted the hands and face to be fairly finished, but I wanted to paint the clothing with as few definitive strokes as possible and I was trying very hard not to overwork the very simple subject, hoping that if I treated the subject as simply as possible, the beauty of the strokes would shine through. This portrait required a lot of courage on my client's part, as she sought to reconcile her vision for the portrait with mine, and in the end, she trusted me to do what I do best.

ARTISTIC PATH

I have drawn all my life, but after graduating with a degree in interior design, I decided to teach myself to paint. I exhibited with a gallery in Carmel, California, for about 10 years, and then decided to study with Daniel Greene at one of his workshops. Most of what I know, though, I have learned from the design principles I learned in interior design school, experimentation, a handful of weekend seminars, as well as the inspiration and high bar provided and set by the Portrait Society of America that has truly played a significant role in where I wanted to go and what I wanted to achieve.



Brooke Olivares

The Purple Orchid, oil, 40 x 30" (102 x 76 cm)

INSPIRATION

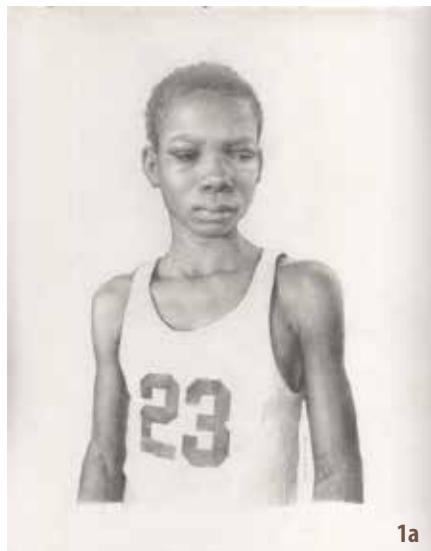
My painting *The Purple Orchid* is of my husband, Matteo Caloiaro, and was inspired by the studio space we share. He is constantly pouring over art books for inspiration and you see behind him, his landscapes in progress. In my work, I strive to capture people in their natural element and to tell a story about them using a common space they either live in or spend much time in. The environment is just as much a portrait of the person as the figure itself. The wear and tear of the studio, the many struggles that go into creating a work of art needed to be captured in the gestural movement of the strokes.

ARTISTIC PATH

Like many of us, I have always loved to draw and paint since I was a child and was extremely fortunate to have parents who encouraged me to pursue it as they saw my passion for painting grow. They were my biggest advocates and they never doubted this profession, just instilled in me that daily practice, dedication, and a lot of heart was what I would need to pursue this path. I had no other back up plan to my career, and so I was fortunate to have many outstanding teachers and mentors as I continued my study through college and began my professional journey as an artist. 

GREGORY MORTENSON

Depicting the Beauty and Triumph of the Human Spirit



1a



1b



1c

Gregory Mortenson received his art training through the rigors of the classical atelier tradition. An award-winning artist, he is known for his ability to capture the individuality of his subjects. Shortly after completing his academic training, Mortenson and his wife found themselves traveling to Haiti to contribute to the rebuilding of an orphanage after the widespread devastation caused by the 2010 earthquake. Moved by what he calls “the beauty and triumph of the human spirit,” he began sketching the children as they waited for their new homes and school, soon creating completed portraits that express their hope despite their suffering.

While at the orphanage, Gregory met a young boy named Orveda and shares his painting process throughout the steps below. Gregory says, “I worked with him and his orphanage in the rebuilding stage. Never have I met a more hopeful, kind soul.”

After another trip to Haiti to teach art at the orphanage, Mortenson curated his 2015 exhibition, *Zion’s Children*, and donated a portion of the sales to the Hope for Life Children’s Home in Gressier, Haiti, allowing the community to continue its growth.

STAGE 1 After completing my graphite drawing, I make a photocopy of the image. Using the photocopy, I transfer the drawing to the canvas by applying a thin layer of raw umber to the back of the copy. I then tape the photocopy to a white canvas and trace the drawing with a ballpoint pen. Clean lines are transferred to the canvas and I allow it to dry.

Once dry, I create an “imprimatura” or “wipe out.” The imprimatura is a transparent underpainting. It is essentially a monochromatic wash of oil paint and turpenoid over a white canvas, which has a permanent drawing. With an imprimatura, you can establish your value hierarchy, strengthen your drawing and address your edges.

STAGE 2 Next I will move form to form, painting each to completion before I move to the next. I begin with the forehead and identify four planes; the light most facing plane (which will be the most chromatic unless influenced by the highlight), the lightest light, the darkest dark and the shadow value. I carefully consider the hue, value and chroma of each. Informed by those four paint strokes, I move plane to plane until the entire forehead is completed.



I then move to the nose and identify the same four planes; its light most facing plane, its lightest light, its darkest dark, and the shadow value. I paint it to completion and then move to each new form (the eyes, the cheeks, the mouth, etc.) and repeat the steps until the entire portrait is finished.

STAGE 3 Next I address the background. I move back to front, beginning with the sky, then the mountains, and finally the grass and foreground. In contrast to the portrait, I keep my brushstrokes much more impressionistic. The contrast between the tightly rendered flesh and the loose brushstrokes of the landscape creates an instant sense of spatial depth. With the background in place, I revisit the figure. Where the figure meets the background, I emphasize lost and found edges.

