

# The Artist's Almanac

April 2009

*As no man is born an artist, so no man is born an angler...  
Angling may be said to be so like the mathematics,  
That it can never be fully learnt.*

Izaak Walton, *The Compleat Angler*

April is a volatile mix of sleet, wind, warm days followed by cold rain, storms, and flooding, that put the fish down deep. Friday another killer tornado swept through Middle Tennessee, the third since 2006. We have been under four tornado watches in the past week and, with our recent experience, we take them very seriously indeed.

But our fruit trees escaped late freeze and their glorious bloom promises fruit to test the strength of their limbs. Their roots have been quietly reaching all winter to nourish their expanding maturity and fruitfulness. It takes time.

So does becoming an artist. We do not begin with spattered abstractions, but with a desire to represent something we see. The great artists of Europe were apprenticed as children; ours children draw as they like, cartoons, flowers, and football players and take art as an elective. Finally, some begin to paint.

Which of us who call ourselves artists has not heard the plaint, *if only I had the talent you do*. We know it to be a false compliment. We know that anyone who is willing to spend the time can draw, if not a likeness, at least a competent representation of a face, that object most observed and adored in our world. A tree is an uncomplaining model and will reward patience and adoration of its seasons with splendor.





To become an artist requires Time, Training, Talent, and Creativity. We all have Time; how we spend it is our passion. Commitment of some time each day to art - whether painting, music, photography, or writing - will furnish the Training required of an artist. From regular sacrifice of Time comes Training, and from Training springs Talent.

As I write this my five-year-old granddaughter appears with an Easter gift for her granddad. The memory of her trip to the beach last week is still vibrant. She has celebrated it with a painting which she explains to me. The sandy beach at the bottom is covered with a layer of seashells washed up by the tide, represented by the blue water. Above it a

seabird soars and the mighty sun fills the picture with its warm rays. Turn it as you will, it is a swirling painting; the sun, surf, tides and screaming birds dizzy us, but the colors are true and a child's impression of a day at the beach lives forever, like the maiden on Keat's Grecian Urn.

Then a mighty wave surges, startles more seabirds into flight, and they, the beach and a rainbow form a round frame, the spray refracting the sunlight into an array of bright color. Her world is in motion. Her painting is realistic and abstract, pure passion, and, if yet untrained, talented, and creative.

Creativity, like Grace, cannot be earned; it is given. It is the gift of being completely open to all the world around us and to whatever our mind and our loved ones offer us. It is seeing what others walk past without noticing. A child given it is most fortunate. Those who have it may feel it, yet never express it, for lack of an artistic vocabulary - a vocabulary that is



learned through commitment of Time to Training until Talent frees the self to express what is within. That indeed is when passion may find its form in expression in creating beauty. To paraphrase Wordsworth, *Art is passion recollected in tranquility.*



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### **Venues**

**Thoughts on Creativity – an illustrated slide lecture At Monthaven Art Society, Hendersonville, Sunday April 26th at 1:30**

**Fall Into Art – Third Annual Art Show benefiting Hendersonville High School's Academic and Arts Program, October 2-4, 2009**

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