

James J. Riley

Arts



Jim graduated from Collinwood High School in January 1956. Following graduation, Jim attended the Cleveland Institute of Art where he majored in portrait painting and illustration. He graduated from the Institute in 1960. In his four decade career, he has designed ceramic-tile murals for churches, schools and other public buildings throughout the United States and in international locations. In addition, he continued to study and practice his painting skills in oil, watercolor, and other drawing media. He is a very active portrait painter and has received recognition for his expertise in painting young subjects, mature individuals, and prominent ones. His portrait paintings are oil paintings. He has the ability to capture the likeness and personality of each subject and each work is a fine painting in itself. His style of painting is characterized as impressionistic and is likely the result from the influence of his two favorite portrait painters, John S. Singer and Nicholai Fechin. In addition to portrait paintings, Jim enjoys working with watercolor paints. He was quoted in *Artist Daily* magazine saying “Watercolor allows me to be a bit more experimental in my approach and to loosen up”. Many of his watercolor paintings are of individual figures and most are done in single sittings of no more than a couple of hours. Unlike some artists who insist on working from live sittings, Jim started using a digital camera early on. He felt he could take a photo (or multiple ones) and take it to a photo shop and make changes to the background colors as well as other changes to the photo. He would then present this photo to the client for approval and then paint the desired portrait. He found this technique worked especially well when working with children who would not sit still when he tried to do a painting.

Jim feels he learned a great deal from the artists he worked with at his first professional job at American Greetings Corporation in Cleveland. The art staff included many accomplished artists, some of whom were award-winning members of the American Watercolor Society. Because of these artists, he was able to expand his expertise in watercolor painting. Jim also worked for mosaic -tile and flooring companies where he provided color and design options.

Jim retired in 2002 and has devoted more time to oil portrait commissions and to the drawing and watercolor work that remained very important to him throughout his life. He is a member of the Portrait Society of America, the American Society of Portrait Artists, the Pennsylvania Watercolor Society, and is a signature member of the Philadelphia Water Color Society. He is represented locally by Lancaster (Pennsylvania) Galleries.