

INK COMBINES WITH WATERCOLORS

Artist's 'pocket sketch' technique was invented through serendipity

Bonnie Henry Arizona Daily Star | Posted: Monday, January 25, 2010 12:00 am | [Comments](#)



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PHOTOS BY JILL TORRANCE / ARIZONA DAILY STAR Kath Macaulay, standing, works with students during a "pocket-sketching" class at her home. The technique involves drawing with an ink pen, smearing the ink, then using watercolors to capture the colors of the moment.

It came about, as so many things do, by accident. "I was on a major painting trip from Las Cruces (N.M.) to Glacier National Park (in Montana), working in watercolor and oils," says Tucson artist Kath Macaulay, who hauled out the easel everywhere she painted.

And then, toward the end of that mid-1980s trip, she was writing a note with an ink pen while holding her painting brush with the other hand.

"My hand with the brush accidentally went to the ink. It smeared. I started experimenting, adding color from the watercolors."

From that would come the art of pocket sketching, using 4-by-6-inch sketch pads, an ink pen and watercolors to create sketches of landscapes, animals and people.

"You sketch with the pen, smearing the ink, and paint with the watercolors," says Macaulay, who dips her

paintbrush into a 35 mm film canister filled with water that's hooked to her fanny pack. "There's no mess. You can sketch anywhere."

The method also is exceedingly easy to learn, says Macaulay, who teaches three-day workshops on pocket sketching. "I have them doing exercises every 25 minutes - a landscape, a still life and people."

And just about anybody, she says, can learn it. "I get people all the time who say they can't draw a straight line."

OK, there have been a few, shall we say, challenged artists.

"I had husband-and-wife accountants. I finally figured out they were being too precise," says Macaulay, who had to give the couple permission to smear.

She'll also acknowledge having two other students who turned out to be hopeless. "But one can't see that she can't draw," says Macaulay.

That doesn't appear to be the case on this, the first day of a recent workshop given in Macaulay's midtown home.

Five women and one man are finishing up landscapes sketched from photographs taken by Macaulay.

"I will use this for traveling," says Doreen Scherf, 55.

"I'm doing this as a stress reliever," says Pete Schlegel, 69.

"I was an art-history major in college, but I did not get the freedom I get from Kath," says Linda Mosbarger, 70. "I can do broader strokes, not be so finite and perfect."

"Many of my students have wanted to do something in art their whole lives but had no chance," says Macaulay. "This takes three days and is not terribly expensive."

It's also highly portable. "You can do this in a museum. You can do this standing in line," says Macaulay. It's also a substitute for the ol' aim and shoot.

"You can take as many pictures as you want on a trip, but when you get home, you don't recognize the picture," says Macaulay. "I teach design, and people remember everything they see because they sit down and study it."

Born in Oregon, Macaulay, 71, held a variety of jobs in the early '60s. "I married an M.D. and followed him around."

By 1971, she was divorced and living in Tucson. "I was a single mom with two kids," says Macaulay, who sold America Indian jewelry, wholesale, everywhere from Disneyland to the Heard Museum in Phoenix.

After a horrific car accident that left her unscathed but still shaken, she sold the business and got into real estate. In 1981, she married geologist Dick Hahman, and in 1986, they moved to Las Cruces.

There, she studied with noted New Mexico artist Carl Cogar and taught art at New Mexico State University.

In 1987, she took that extended painting trip, heading to Glacier National Park. "It was the van, a gun, a dog, a cooler and a six-pack on a painting trip," says Macaulay, who lived on Wolf Brand Chili for the next four weeks.

It was at the end of that trip that she discovered pocket sketching. In time, she started giving workshops.

She and Hahman moved back to Tucson in 1996. Since then, she has taught pocket sketching everywhere from Canyon Ranch and the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum to the Sedona Arts Center.

In 1994, Hahman was on a job in Yuma when he was hit by a car while walking in a crosswalk. He underwent 12 major back surgeries in 14 years. Later, he developed Parkinson's disease and died in August of last year.

"I did not do workshops for about a year," says Macaulay. "I was taking care of my husband."

Now she's back, with several workshops scheduled this spring in Tucson, as well as one in Sedona. In early fall, she'll be teaching a workshop in Tuscany, Italy, arranged by the Sedona Arts Center.

"I had a painter in Sedona who said she would never use pocket sketching," says Macaulay. "By the third day, she was telling me, 'I will do this the rest of my life.'"

If you go

Kath Macaulay's next pocket-sketching workshop will be held Feb. 5-7. The cost is \$185, plus \$37 for materials. For more information, call 318-9291.

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Kath Macaulay,

Tucson artist

Bonnie Henry's column appears Sundays and Mondays. Reach her at 573-4179 or at bhenry@azstarnet.com, or write to P.O. Box 26807, Tucson, AZ 85726.