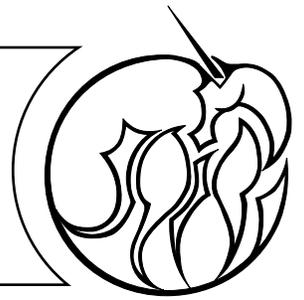


{ the avant-garde }

Katherine N. Crowley Fine Art & Design



MONTHLY MAGAZINE VOLUME X No.5 10TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE 2017

{10 years}

by Katherine N. Crowley

Ten years ago, I read an article about self-promotion in *I.D.* magazine. The article suggested that by producing a periodic newsletter, a self-employed designer could keep prospective clients engaged with their work – a good tool for building a personal brand, building trust in potential clients, and hopefully building business. At the time I had begun more actively pursuing a fine art career, in addition to my day job as a designer. I had just completed my largest commission: a 30" x 60" oil on canvas painting titled *The Four Seasons*. It was being shipped to its new owners who lived near Cedar Rapids, Iowa. It would not be shown in any local exhibitions, so I thought an announcement of some kind would allow me to show it off to friends and family. But to write a newsletter would be a big undertaking. I would need to create an original publication on a regular basis in order to “build my personal brand, trust, and hopefully business”. I was not sure that I would be able to talk about myself that much. Well...

I considered adding articles about non-me related topics. Through my own version of continuing education, I attend a lot of arts events: museum exhibits, gallery openings, films, performances, and artist lectures. I thought I could write about that. Then there are all the talented artists I know... I began to think that a newsletter might be a realistic undertaking.

In October of 2007, I published the first issue of *The Avant-Garde*. I decided upon the title with the intent to document how contemporary artists are pushing the boundaries of art in so many different ways. I designed a flexible format that could accommodate different content. I decided to consistently include a section that lists art exhibits in Columbus as well as museums throughout the country.

The Avant-Garde is written, edited, and electronically published to my website on a monthly basis (more or less). I respect reproduction copyright guidelines, and proper bibliography. Each issue takes about 8 hours to produce. I have no sponsors and receive no compensation. I enjoy the process. It gives me an excuse to explore all that the arts has to offer, pushes me to make better work, and has opened a lot of doors for me. I thank you for reading all these years and hope you continue to do so.



Check out previous issues of *The Avant-Garde* at <http://www.the-avant-garde.com>, where you can also sign up for email alerts announcing the latest issue.

{anatomy of a painting}



How a commissioned painting for a couple's anniversary went from idea, to sketch, to finished painting

by Katherine N. Crowley

Earlier this year I displayed 15 paintings at the Worthington Community Center in a show called *Natural Surroundings*. Shortly after the show came to a close, I received an email from a woman interested in having a painting commissioned as an anniversary gift for her husband. I invited her to my studio and we worked out the details together. I then set to work on the painting *The Village Green*. The painting depicts the place where the couple became engaged in Worthington, Ohio. Established in 1803, the 3.5-acre Village Green is located in the middle of downtown Worthington and is an important part of the city's New England heritage. Worthington's forefathers initially set aside the area as an open pasture and grazing place for farmers when they came into town. The Village Green's walkways are lined with brick. The bricks on the northwest quadrant bear the names of early pioneers. The southeast quadrant of the green is the location of Worthington's holiday tree. The green is often used for festivals, concerts and the summer farmer's market.

**Research**

My first step was to photograph the area. The engagement took place in a circle of pavement at the end of a path in front of the Presbyterian Church, and my client requested that the space be the center of interest. I took a few shots of the church, the Griswold Center, the Alfred Tibor sculpture, and the concrete circle. I determined what I thought would make the best composition and took several photos from that vantage point. After starting the painting, I returned to the Green a second time to take some more pictures.

**Drawing**

Back in the studio I referenced the photos I took and created a pencil sketch of the composition on tracing paper. I showed the sketch to my husband who noted that the perspective was a little confusing. The colonial-style church, with its tall spire, is a difficult structure to draw within the confines of the of an 8" x 10" format. He suggested I perform a two-point perspective exercise to make sure the proportions were correct and the angles of the building terminate properly. I took the sketch and photocopied it several times. I used a ruler to draw perspective lines connecting the church to the horizon line.

Transferring the Drawing

Because it took significant work to set up the composition I decided to transfer the sketch to the canvas panel by tracing it. This is not how I generally work; in fact, I typically use paint to loosely mark where major compositional elements will appear and continue the painting from there. This time I used tracing paper to duplicate the sketch; and transfer paper to redraw the tracing onto the canvas panel. Once I was completely satisfied with the drawing, I began the painting.

**Painting Strategy**

I knew I would need to execute the painting over several sessions in the studio, which meant the paint would dry in the meantime. A wet-on-dry approach would prevent colors from mixing together when applied on top

of one another so I developed a strategy on which colors would go where, and when. I like to work from “back to front”, meaning the background is painted first, the middle ground next, and the foreground last. I altered this approach a bit because I wanted to save the architectural elements for later in the process. The red colors I would need to use to represent bricks could easily mix into other colors if still wet, and the level of detail is more significant in these areas.

The Background and Middle Ground

I started with the sky, which is a lighter color of blue toward the horizon than toward the dome of the sky. I eliminated any clouds, which would lead to a challenging decision later. I moved down the canvas panel and added a variety of greens as base colors for each of the trees. I returned later to add different green highlights and shadows. I paid close attention to the smaller, brighter tree at the center of the composition. I wanted to showcase its presence in the light, but not make it the center of interest.

The Foreground

I worked back and forth between the light and dark areas of the grass, as well as the walking path. I carefully chose the direction of my brush strokes in order to give a sun dappled appearance to the herringbone pattern when painting the bricks of the path. I made sure that the concrete circle – the conceptual focus of the painting – was integrated into the composition in a subtle manner, but bright enough to draw the viewer’s attention.

The Architectural Elements

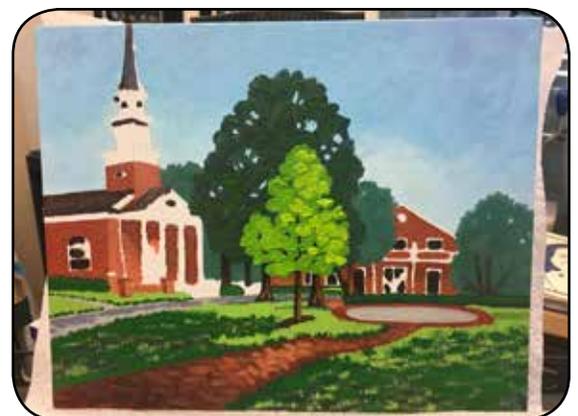
I then turned my attention to the buildings, focusing on the different values of the bricks and roof forms in light and shadow. I began adding landscaping details and returned to the brighter colored trim of each building. I added the Alfred Tibor sculpture. I worked and reworked the building trim details, paying close attention to the shadows created by overhangs, window mullions, and the decorative elements that define the colonial-style architecture.

Finished... But Then Again, Maybe Not

I finally reached a point where I felt that the painting was finished; at least as I had first intended it – something was not right. All of the elements were as I had designed them. I was happy with the rendering of the buildings and the highlights on the trees. But something seemed out of place. The sky was flat and I was concerned my choice to eliminate the clouds was wrong. Adding clouds back in at this point could be tricky. I took some photos on my phone and went home to show them to my husband.

Critique

Matt looked at the photo and noted that there was a shadow on the walking path in the foreground but that there was nothing in the painting that indicated what was creating that shadow. He compared my photos of the painting with my photos of the site and suggested that I add a branch to the top of the composition. When I took the site photos I was standing beneath a tree that I had not intended to include in the final work. His suggestion was a good one but in order for it to fit into the painting, it would need to be a fairly large, dark, form at the top of the sky. If I got it wrong, I could ruin the entire painting.





Peer Review

I sketched out a solution on tracing paper and laid it over top of the original drawing. I then – *carefully* – placed it on top of the painting and took a few photos to show to my husband and some artist friends.

In the design world, I have worked with editors, architects, engineers, and other artists who are responsible for reviewing a project in which they are not involved. Following Matt’s suggestion, I decided that a peer review would be a good idea, so I hopped on Facebook. I am the member of a few social media art forums and am friends with a number of artists who frequently participate in group critiques. I explained my concerns, posted a couple of photos, and asked for feedback. I began receiving responses within a couple of hours and everyone agreed that the branch should be added.

Adding the Branch

I used the same process as I had earlier to transfer the drawing of the branch to the canvas panel. I mixed a dark green color and started painting in the shapes of the leaves. Because the branch is in silhouette in the foreground, the value needed to be a dark, solid color. I had applied thick paint to the brightly colored tree in the center of the painting to create texture and felt the need to do the same with the branch because it is the element “closest” to the viewer.

I then waited for it to dry. It can take up to a full week for the oil to evaporate out of the paint, and I was under a deadline so this was a bit of a concern. I ended up rescheduling my delivery date in order to accommodate the decision to add the branch.

The Final Touches

I mixed a few bright pigments and painted flowers in the planters on the steps of the church and as an entrance to the church walking path. I perfected a few of the architectural details on the church and the Griswold Center. Then, I signed the painting. Once the painting was completely dry, I painted over the entire work with Dammar varnish – a clear coating that enhances the luminosity of the colors and protects the painting.

Framing

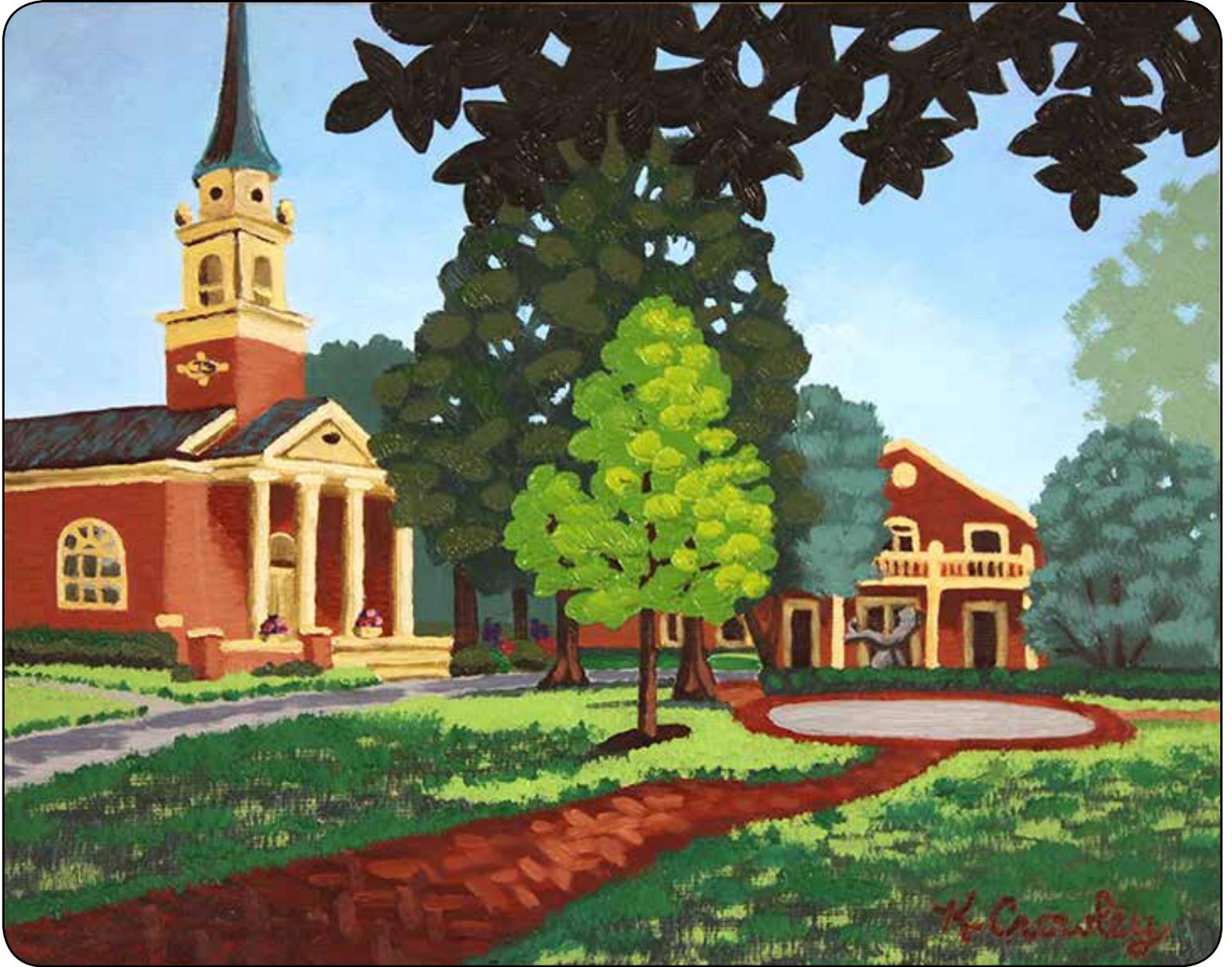
I framed the painting in a mahogany-colored, traditional-style frame. I added hardware to the back and wired the frame for hanging. I applied a silver label with information about the painting including title, medium, my branding and contact information. I covered the back of the frame with craft paper and boxed up the final work.

Acquisition

My client had said that she did not want to see the painting until it was finished – no sketches, no progress photos. She said she enjoyed my style and trusted that the final work would meet her expectations. So no pressure there. She met me at my studio, and to my delight, she was delighted. I presented her with a folio of information describing the commissioned painting, along with an artist statement, biography, and resumé.

A few weeks later I received an email from her describing how happy her husband was to receive this bespoke gift. *The Village Green* is proudly displayed in his private office. Congratulations Corrina and Tom and thank you for the opportunity to honor your story.





Above: *The Village Green*, oil on canvas panel, in the private collection of Thomas and Corrina Malek.



{columbus open studio & stage 2017}

For the second year in a row, I was selected to participate in the two-day, city-wide tour, Columbus Open Studio & Stage. I visited with some old friends and met a number of new art lovers, including local radio personality Mark Dantzer (who is now co-hosting the podcast *Rock and Roll Book Club* <http://rnrbookclub.com>). During the tour I demonstrated my painting style by live-painting a still life of a vase of flowers; and explained the process of casting bronze sculptures by showing examples of wax, silicone, and finished metal samples. It was a great event and I am proud to be counted among the 50 talented artists who showcased their work this year. I thank all those who helped me out, including my studio assistants Matt Anderle, Chris Williams, and organizers Catherine Bell Smith, Amy Leibrand, Lisa McLymont, Stephanie Rond, and the Greater Columbus Arts Council.

{all around the town}

The Columbus College of Art and Design, Beeler Gallery (<http://www.ccad.edu/events-calendar-news/exhibitions>)
"Alan Shields: A Different Kind of Painting", Through January 2, 2018
"Stitch", Through January 2, 2018

The Columbus Cultural Arts Center (<http://www.culturalartscenteronline.org>)
"Rust to Dust: Frayed Opulence and Luxuriant Ruin", November 17-December 30
"CAC Studio Sale", November 10-11

The Columbus Museum of Art (<http://www.columbusmuseum.org>)
"Beyond Impressionism", Through January 21, 2018

Dublin Arts Council (<http://www.dublinarts.org>)
"Landscapes: Rod Bouc", Through November 30
"Louise Captein: As Per Usual", November 14-December 15

The High Road Gallery and Studios (<http://www.highroadgallery.com>)
"The World As We See It", Through November 18

McConnell Arts Center (<http://www.mcconnellarts.org>)
"Todd Camp & Richard Duarte Brown" Through December 30

OSU Urban Arts Space (<http://www.uas.osu.edu>)
"Department of Art BFA Thesis Exhibition", November 28-December 16

The Pizzuti Collection (<http://www.pizzuticollection.org>)
"Lines/Edges: Frank Stella on Paper", Opens November 17
"Pair: Glen Baldrige and Alex Dodge", Opens November 17

Ohio Historical Society (<http://www.ohiohistory.org>)
"Bhutanese-Nepali Neighbors: Photographs by Tariq Tareq", May 5, 2017-January 7, 2018

The Riffe Gallery (<http://www.oac.ohio.gov/Riffe-Gallery/Exhibitions>)
"2017 Biennial Juried Exhibition", November 2, 2017-January 6, 2018

The Wexner Center (<http://www.wexarts.org>)
"Cindy Sherman: Imitation of Life", Through December 31

{performing arts}

BalletMet (<http://www.balletmet.org>)
"Front Row", November 9-19, BalletMet Performance Space
"The Nutcracker", December 8-24, Ohio Theater

CAPA (<http://www.capa.com>)
"Kid Power: Lunch Line", November 6, Lincoln Theater
"A Night with Janis Joplin", November 7, Palace Theater
"Simply Three", November 7, Lincoln Theater
"Waitress", November 7-12, Ohio Theater
"Wild Kratts Live", November 18, Ohio Theater
"B - The Underwater Bubble Show", November 19, Lincoln Theater
"A Christmas Carol", November 24-26, Ohio Theater
"Brain Candy Live", November 28, Palace Theater

CATCO (<http://www.catcoistheatre.org/>)
"American Buffalo", November 30-December 1, Studio One, Riffe Center

Columbus Symphony Orchestra at the Ohio Theater (unless otherwise noted) (<http://www.columbussymphony.com>)
"Spanish Flamenco Festival: Rodrigo's Guitar Concerto", November 3-4

{and beyond}

The Akron Art Museum (<http://www.akronartmuseum.org>)
"Alchemy: Transformations in Gold", Through January 21, 2018
"Heavy Metal", Through February 18, 2018

The Museum of Fine Arts Boston (<http://www.mfa.org>)
"Takashi Murakami: Lineage of Eccentrics", Through April 1, 2018
"Showdown! Kuniyoshi vs. Kunisada", Through December 10

ICA Boston (<http://www.icaboston.org>)
"Dana Shutz", Through November 28
"Mark Dion: Misadventures of a 21st-Century Naturalist", Through December 31

The Cincinnati Art Museum (<http://www.cincinnatiartmuseum.org>)
"iris van Herpen: Transforming Fashion", Through January 7, 2018

Contemporary Arts Center (<http://www.contemporaryartscenter.org>)
"Swoon: The Canyon 1999-2017", Through February 25, 2018

The Cleveland Museum of Art (<http://www.clevelandart.org>)
"The Jazz Age: American Style in the 1920s", Through January 14, 2018
"Rodin - 100 Years", Through May 13, 2018

The Art Institute of Chicago (<http://www.artic.edu>)
"Tarsila do Amaral: Inventing Modern Art in Brazil", Through January 7, 2018

Dayton Art Institute (<http://www.daytonartinstitute.org>)
"Alphonse Mucha: Master of Art Nouveau" Through December 31

Detroit Institute of Art (<http://www.dia.org>)
"D-Cyphered: Portraits by Jenny Risher", Through February 18, 2018

Indianapolis Museum of Art (<http://www.imamuseum.org>)
"City as Canvas", Through January 28, 2018

Los Angeles County Museum of Art (<http://www.lacma.org>)
"Playing with Fire: Paintings by Carlos Almaraz", Through December 3

Minneapolis Institute of Art (<http://www.artsmia.org>)
"Eyewitness Views: Making History in Eighteenth-Century Europe", Through December 31

Metropolitan Museum of Art, NYC (<http://www.metmuseum.org>)
"Age of Empires," Through July 16

Museum of Modern Art, New York (<http://www.moma.org>)
"Sara Berman's Closet", Through November 26

New Orleans Museum of Art (<http://www.noma.org>)
"Orientalism: Taking and Making", Through December 31

Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (<http://www.cmoa.org>)
"20/20: The Studio Museum in Harlem and Carnegie Museum of Art", Through December 31

The Warhol, Pittsburgh (<http://www.warhol.org>)
"Farhad Moshiri: Go West", Through January 14, 2018

San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (<http://www.sfmoma.org>)
"Walker Evans", Through February 4

The Toledo Museum of Art (<http://www.toledomuseum.org>)
"Drawn from Classicism: Modern Artists' Books", Through December 10

The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (<http://www.nga.gov>)
"Vermeer and the Masters of Genre Painting: Inspiration and Rivalry", Through January 21, 2018

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