

Ann James Massey



"When Robert Hedley put a wax pencil in my hand, it was like a miracle." At the age of 18, Ann James Massey was taking private lessons in El Paso "to discover if she had talent."

Her light touch and patient layering with the wax pencil achieved the feeling of depth and realism in her work that quickly led to recognition, both in this country and abroad.

Twenty years later, under the tutelage of Ann Schuler in Baltimore, Ann Massey discovered the painting technique utilizing the same intricately fine touch that would again hurl her name into international circles. Her painting, "The Connoisseur," was awarded "The Barbara Tate Award for an Oil Painting" in London's Society of Women Artists' 140th Annual Exhibition. The piece was chosen personally by Barbara Tate, the Society's president for 16 years, and the award was presented by Her Royal Highness, Princess Michael of Kent, and by Malcolm Hay, the Palace of Westminster Curator of Works of Art.

As Ann continued relating the wonderful support she had received in her home town of El Paso, including the recent induction into the El Paso International Museum of Art's Hall of Fame, a phone call interrupted with the news "The Connoisseur" had received yet another award. This time in New York City, Ann's painting was chosen for The Allied Artists of America Award for Oil Painting at The

American Artist Professional League's 73rd Grand National Exhibition.

"I might never have developed my capabilities without the strong support of my family." Ann was raised in an atmosphere of art, music, and books. As a child, instead of playing with the other children, she loved to flip through the albums of art that her grandmother had collected from magazines as a hobby. "My parents offered encouragement when encouragement was needed and support when support was needed." Her parents are Imogen Moore James and the late Fred James. "At the age of 22, when I called my dad from San Antonio and told him I wanted to move back in with them and open a gallery, instead of screaming, 'are you crazy,' he thought for a moment and replied that he knew just the place for a gallery." Her dad loved to dabble in carpentry and kept her supplied with the smooth mahogany boards used for her paintings. "One of the last things he said to me before passing away was, 'do you have enough boards?'" Fred James also painted and photographed. Ann drew for several years from her father's photos.

Returning from a trip to Rome, Ann was

(Above) Ann demonstrates the intricately fine touch that has earned her international recognition. (Opposite) "The Connoisseur" by Ann James Massey. Original oil, 16" x 20" image size. From the artist's collection.





(Above)
"Fisherman
Mending His Net"
by Ann James
Massey. Wax
pencil, 13" x 15.5".
From the
collection of
Helen Mintz.
(Above, right) Ann
with her mother
Imogen Moore
James at Ann's
induction into the
El Paso
International
Museum of Art's
Hall of Fame.
(Below) "The
Flautist" by Ann
James Massey.
Wax pencil,
9.5" x 12". From
the collection of
Martha G.
de Chavez.

working on a piece in the airplane. She had two offers from people passing down the aisle to pay whatever she wanted for the finished work. That was the moment she realized her work had a broader appeal.

Eight years ago Ann was offered a temporary job teaching in Paris, and decided to start a new chapter in her life. "Paris is definitely artistically stimulating.

The museums and the art of the masters are breathtaking. But it is also wonderful to be able to return to El Paso each year, to this haven of sunshine and space. I still love it."

A deep passion for the classic works, especially the Dutch artists of the 17th century, drives the strokes of Ann's brush. The realism of the subject matter requires little interpretation, but the story around the image can be different for every individual who peers into the scene. "I paint for myself, but each piece seems to have an owner, someone who says, 'My God, that's me in that painting,' or perhaps, 'How I wish that were me in that painting.' After so much effort is put into a painting, finding someone who feels as strongly about it as I do is very rewarding."

Ann's detailed wax pencil drawings start with a loose gestural graphite sketch followed by gentle layers of the wax pencil. The delicate process, often requiring months, produces a high degree of richness and detail not possible with carbon or charcoal.



Her equally intricate paintings utilize handground powdered pigments and black oil on the mahogany boards. The first layer is a thin toned wash, the second a burnt umber value rendition of the image, then three or more layers of color, with final layers of glazing and scumbling. Between each layer is a handmade Flemish medium. The method creates luminosity and depth unmatched in other more expedient techniques.

Selected European and American awards of Ann James Massey

The Allied Artists of America Award for Oil Painting at The American Artist Professional League's 73rd Grand National Exhibition in New York; The Barbara Tate Award for an Oil Painting at the Society of Women Artists 140th Annual Exhibition in London; First Place in Drawing and Pastel at The Miniature Art Society of Florida Silver Anniversary International Miniature Art Show - 2000 in St. Petersburg, Florida; Best of Show at 33ème Salon National d'Art de l'Automne, Société Régionale des Amis des Beaux Arts, Centre Culturel Albert Camus, Issoudun, France; Artist Showcase Winner in Manhattan Arts International "Herstory" Competition; The John R. Grabach Memorial for Oil at The American Artists Professional League 71st Grand National Exhibition in New York; The Katherine A. Lovell Memorial Award for Oil at The Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Art Club 102nd Annual Open Exhibition in New York; The Director's Award at The American Artists Professional League 69th Grand National Exhibition 1997 in New York; National Arts Club Award for Graphics at Allied Artists of America 77th Annual Exhibition in New York; Silver Medal of Honor in the Graphics and Drawing Division at Knickerbocker Artists New York 40th Annual Open Juried Exhibition in New York.

