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Emily Buchanan is a local landscape painter whom I greatly admire. You have likely seen her set up along the roads with the prettiest vistas, above Mudge Pond for instance, ticking off strokes of paint in the shape of the Sharon Oaks, or down along the river, recording the reflections that flow into her gaze, passing, babbling away under the bridge, captured forever by the tip of her brush. The way she translates atmosphere lends a continuity to the work whether she is painting in the Hudson River Valley, above the cliffs of Malibu, or trailing a path through the Florida dunes.

Buchanan prefers to paint plain air, out in the open as opposed to in the studio and has done it all over the world. She is one of those rare breed of artists who truly speak in a visual language taken directly from life. She is not painting a photograph and it is evident. When you look at one of her paintings you get a broader perspective than a mechanical translation and receive a more personal account of her interaction with a place. Being on the spot, a painter is in a position to capture the nuances of color and light that present themselves. For Buchanan, is what painting is all about.

"I just like to paint outdoors. The freedom of it," she told me during a recent conversation. "I often travel to warmer climates, doing specific commissions when the weather is cold in New England." She has painted in Australia, Thailand, Costa Rica, and The Virgin Islands to name a few. Earlier this year *Quest Magazine* said that, "Buchanan's paintings bring all of those wonderful places, and the emotions that they evoke, to those who can't be there."

The early life of Emily

"I was born in Beverly Farms, Massachusetts. I began painting as a child with my grandmother, Eloise Gardner. Later I studied at Lyme Academy, the National Academy of Art, the Art Student's League, and then in the Boston atelier of Paul Ingbreton for a few years. At that point I wasn't painting landscape, it was more portrait, still life, and cast drawing," Buchanan explained. "Over time, I became drawn to the landscape more and more. I have gone out painting with different painters and taken a few workshops, but really it's just going out everyday and doing it. Finding out what worked and what didn't just took years and years of repetition."

"Once I really started to do landscapes it was hard for me to go back into the studio. I love being outside. I meet different people every day. I know a lot of artists don't like it when people come up and talk to them. I love it. Most people are respectful and don't stay too long, but it helps to make everyday different and interesting."

Major influences

I asked Buchanan if she would name the Hudson River School as an influence: "I am influenced by the Hudson River School, and Kensett in particular. His painting of Lake George in the Metropolitan Museum, for instance, is what led me to discover Lake George. I also love Corot. If there is anything I have taken from Corot it's that my greens are so grey. If the green is too vibrant it can kill the whole painting. I'm also very inspired by Sargent, even though he rarely painted landscapes."

Over the course of this past year I have had the pleasure of visiting with Buchanan on several occasions. She lives with her husband and two talented and active children near the Housatonic River in Northwest Connecticut. Each time that we meet I am reminded of the dedication and integrity that she has toward, not only her family but to her work



and generally speaking, in her life over all. The balance that we find in her compositions seems to me to not only be an echo of a beautiful scene, but also is analogous to the balance in her life for one can only get accomplished as much as she does if they themselves are balanced.

Some say that becoming a professional artist takes luck, but I would say that doing the work, putting in the time is a more important and dependable element to building a successful career as an artist. Buchanan is fit, eats healthy, and spends a lot of time with her family in addition to traveling and painting. She is the real deal when it comes to an artist living their dream and sharing their work with thousands of people, perhaps even for countless generations. My friend Daniel Graves, founder of the Florence Academy of Art is fond of saying, "Paint every day, it's the only way," and it is evident that Buchanan has spent countless years, full of hours, at her easel.

An artist's connection

Painting outdoors affords her another pleasure and that is to get to know people who are genuinely interested. Those who are curious about what she is doing, who stop and as they walk up behind her,

looking past her into the canvas, fall into the beauty of a seasoned artist creating something “real.” Their eyes dart back and forth from the painting to the landscape and they feel the likeness and fall in love. Many of her clients, often repeat buyers, have become fans of hers, and tend to commission special paintings from her, have been introduced to her by simply stopping to see what she is doing.

Here is one such example she told me about. “Kim Taylor commissioned me to paint their view in Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall, after the James Taylor song. The way that came about was when somebody stopped while I was painting, and commissioned me to paint her view. While I was doing that, she told me that she was a decorator, and that the Taylors were clients. So much is being in the right place at the right time, and my collectors are so generous to me. I am constantly amazed at how kind people are.”

Another time she shared a story with me about a new acquaintance, a woman who had stopped to admire her work and who proposed that Buchanan have a show of her work back in this woman’s town to which Buchanan replied, “But, I don’t know anyone there.” The woman exclaimed with a smile, “Well, I do!” I believe that when you follow through and do the work, you are rewarded with seemingly chance happenings, but they are more like orchestrated events by the will to do things well and with sincerity.

I like to ask artists for personal stories regarding the reward of living a creative life and making paintings that have an emotional effect on the viewer so I asked Buchanan to describe an event that has been extremely satisfying for her during her career. “The greatest compliment that I ever received was when I was commissioned years ago by two children to do a painting for their father. Years later they wrote to me and told me that he had passed away, but that he had asked that the painting be brought to the hospital because it made him feel connected to a place that meant so much to him. That touched me deeply. A painting is not a photograph. It is so much more.”

A rewarding career

Buchanan has had many successes in her career. Just this past year she was commissioned by the



White House to paint the annual Christmas card for the first family. This kind of opportunity comes from being a professional and by being the best at what you do. She and her family were invited to the White House Christmas party where her painting was on display. An honor well deserved.

Buchanan was chosen to paint the White House holiday card through her involvement in the Government Arts in the Embassies program which she speaks highly of and has a clear admiration for. It was through this organization that the project to paint the White House holiday card came about, the entire process taking about a year. She told me that she has worked with the program for about nine years and that they hang paintings for two to three years at a time, depending on the length of an ambassador’s appointment. She was the choice artist of former senator Joseph Lieberman, who displayed her Connecticut landscapes in his Washington, D.C., office.

When I asked her if she ever had any contact with the White House before receiving the commission she replied, “I come from an interesting old Boston family that had some connections, but it’s not how I got this commission. My only family connection to the White House was my great grandfather. He went to boarding school with FDR, and they remained lifelong friends. I don’t know if that counts, though, since it’s ancient history now.”

She uses her ability to describe a long steady gaze through the space in between the trees, out over the lake beyond, toward the mountains in the

distance. She doesn’t usually add a lot of text as accompaniments to her paintings but prefers to let the paintings speak for themselves, in that language that paint was designed to speak. It is a rare gift, and maybe there is an element of luck that allows collectors to come into contact with her paintings, but once that happens, that they seek out her work to buy more is pure intention.

Buchanan is represented by Mark Murray Fine Paintings in New York, NY, as well as the Cavalier Galleries, both in Connecticut and Nantucket. Her paintings also hang in the lobby of the Sagamore Hotel at Lake George; at The Point, on Saranac Lake; at the Mayflower Grace in Washington, CT; and at Winvian in Morris, CT. Her list of collectors is long but with such notable people as James Taylor, Meryl Streep, and Alec Baldwin it is easy to understand why the White House came to choose her. She is the real deal. ●

To learn more about Emily Buchanan and or to reach her, visit her website at www.emilybuchanan.com.

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