

John Whitney- a Sarasota Artist

John Whitney's childhood was considerably different than most. His aunt Marjorie Whitney was Chairman of the Design Department of the University of Kansas, muralist, and illustrator of numerous books and publications. His father William R. Whitney Jr. had been Supervisor of The Arts and Crafts Division of WPA in Kansas, displayed work at the 1939 New York World's Fair, and also worked with Eleanor Roosevelt as an advisor for a WPA arts project called The Reedsville Project in Arthurdale, West Virginia. Growing up in a family of artists, he spent much of his youth on painting excursions traveling to river banks, road cuts, and lakes, looking for roots and boulders that through erosion had exposed the skeleton structure that formed the vast prairies of Kansas and Oklahoma. They gathered the creek water and mixed it with the prepared watercolor which was applied on the carefully stretched Arches paper. For the hours that followed John would be lectured on composition, pigment grinds, the minimalism and descriptive meaning of each paint stroke. While painting, John's aunt and father told of their friends Albert Bloch, a Taos artist, Chair of Painting Department at the University of Kansas, and a member of the Blue Rider movement, and Will Penny who was never without a sketch book in his hands. The stories described the dedication these artists had in their pursuit of art.

John Whitney has had a rich life in visual arts starting in 1960 as a stage designer and muralist. After his studies at the University of Kansas he moved on to become an accomplished sculptor in New Mexico exhibiting from 1965 -1970 in Jamison Gallery and Collectors' Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico and Gallery A in Taos, New Mexico.

John is currently a traditional graphics artist and painter in oil and watercolor. In the studio where he creates new works using a 24" etching press built to his specifications by Conrad Machine Company. In this studio he works on his well known figurative works on paper that are in demand throughout the World. His work also includes drypoints and etching prints hand pulled from the same press. Except of the etchings all of his painting are originals. It is from that same studio he also creates his magnificent emotion based oil paintings and his very popular watercolors. His work today can be found in collection from Egypt to Guatemala and on to Germany.

As in his childhood when he used the roots on the river banks to describe the understructure of the prairie, John Whitney paints the essence within us. His complex emotional figurative based work displays John's compassion for form and shared space while conveying expressionism. He captures the substance in the subject and gives it movement by creating multiple views of its form. Each viewing shapes a different mood and in their fusion he sculpts the intricate novel that reflects our lives.