

ArtStory

Pursuing quality of life.

Wilbur Elsea

Genre:

Watercolor Artist

Notable Shows:

Kansas Watercolor Show
Los Angeles National Watercolor Show
Philadelphia National Watercolor Show
Colorado National Watercolor Show



"...I want you to be able to put yourself in the painting. To imagine yourself there."

-Wilbur Elsea

When Wilbur Elsea retired at age 63, he thought he was finishing up, not starting over. Yet what began as a retirement hobby soon developed into a new passion in life.

In 1990, after a successful career as a Wichita advertising executive, Elsea took up a brush and audited a painting class at Wichita State University (where he is also credited with creating the WuShock mascot logo). He took advanced drawing courses at the Wichita Center for the Arts. Then watercolor overtook him. He planned to paint 50 paintings and then decide whether to continue in watercolor.

Six hundred works later, there's no end in sight. "I've found the perfect old man's hobby," says Elsea.

Spending more than 25 hours a week in his studio, his subjects each have great meaning to him. "It has to be intriguing - a cityscape, a leaning barn, shadows playing back and forth. But I then make it my own, adding and omitting as needed to create the perfect image. What you see is not necessarily what you get in the end," says Elsea.

He is a self-described realist when it comes to his work. No deep psychological meaning or hidden messages here. "When you look at one of my paintings, I want you to be able to put yourself in the painting. To imagine yourself there."

Though his paintings leave little room for interpretation, he stirs emotion simply



with the image itself. He recalls one man with tears in his eyes after a house in a painting unleashed a flood of memories, for the house closely resembled the man's childhood home .

He likens painting to another retirement favorite - golf. "The challenge is between you and the course," comments Elsea. "In painting, it is just me, the paint and the image. It's up to me to get the idea out of my head and on to the paper."

Elsea shows his work across the country, participating in an average of 12 shows each year.

Though he built a second career in painting, Elsea is still a student of art. In fact, several paintings exist that he says will never be seen by the public as they are just not right. "There are no difficult situations that you don't see until you try to paint it."



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