

## by Jim Woods, 2019 (with his author credit at the end)

Jim Woods discovered drawing when he was in his teens, but it was many years before he started painting. Initially self taught, he attended courses at Seneca College then classes at the Newmarket School of Fine Art and workshops that introduced him to a range of media from pastels and watercolour to oils. Despite all the classes, workshops and art shows and the fact that his paintings hang in private collections across Ontario, Woods still calls himself "just a hobbyist."



When he first started taking classes in Newmarket, Woods was told that he had talent and was invited to participate in a juried art show in Aurora. He submitted three paintings; all three pieces were accepted. Two sold. "I thought, this is neat!" Woods said.

Since then, he has shown at Society of York Region Artists (SOYRA) shows, at the Millpond Gallery and the Gibson Centre in Alliston ON, and at other small galleries across the region. Woods has always preferred the "workability" of oils to the "happy mistakes" of watercolour, and called Martin Pryce, founder of the Newmarket School of



Fine Art, one of the biggest influences in his work. In fact, Woods admits he used to try to copy Pryce's style. Now he says, "No matter how much you try to emulate someone's style, you end up expressing your own personality."

Woods' personality comes through clearly, especially in his landscapes that evoke Ontario's woods and wilderness areas, and

engage the viewer. "You have to have a focal point, that draws the eye in," Woods said of his work, often painting trails that invite the viewer to "go for a walk, in the painting." Some scenes are local: the winter woods at Scanlon Creek, for example, and autumn trees and lakes in Algonquin Park. Others range from a farm in Portugal, glimpsed in a documentary, to the stark beauty of the high Arctic a place that Woods knows well.

Woods, a retired Meteorological Technician with DND and Environment Canada, worked on a Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker and flew in the Arctic for five years from 1970 to 1975, flying more than 3,000 hours over the islands, rocks and ice. "That was a highlight of my career, those five years," he said. "I've seen every square inch of the Arctic, more than once" - and his Arctic-inspired paintings, of locales like Camel Island and Cape Dyer, capture the clear light and harsh landscapes of the far north.

Woods also takes inspiration from the greats - Rembrandt, Gainsborough, Constable, Turner, the Impressionists, Canadian artist Lawren Harris. Viewing their work, he said, "When you see that, you can't wait to come home and grab a brush." Landscape remains his favourite subject although he also paints "the odd still life" and animal portraits - but no



people. "I don't do 'people' portraits," he said. His work has evolved over the past 35 years of painting. "I think I've improved my use of colour," Woods said. And while he may agree with the teacher who told him, "Contrast is everything, colour just adds interest," he now says, "but it adds a lot of interest." Woods does his painting in a basement studio without windows. Instead, he has rigged up artificial lighting over his easel that provides a full spectrum of light, as he works from photos, sketches and his imagination. "I keep trying to capture some new images. Hopefully people will enjoy them," Woods said, quoting another teacher: "My best painting is my next one."

Woods, who was one of the winners of the 2018 Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury (BWG) Art Competition, will have from 16 to 20 of his works on display at the BWG PASSION MADE artisans' tour, Sept. 21-22, 2019 at the BWG Library. "

He noted that sometimes it's easy to paint what he has in mind - "It just clicks" - but at other times it can be difficult and frustrating. Art can be "a lot of work," he said, "but if you love it enough, it'll work for you."

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