

August, 2018

### Artist Statement, Michael Duffy

In December of 1968, after a year in Southeast Asia, I returned from the Vietnam War as a young First Lieutenant. I was discharged into civilian life at the Oakland Army Terminal on December 24<sup>th</sup> 1968. One week later I began classes at Colorado College, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

My formal art education began at Colorado College where I studied printmaking under Professor Mary Chenoweth. Mary attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago after serving in the U.S. Navy during World War II. She was a significant influence on my work. I studied oil painting under Professor Bernard Arnest, a skilled landscape painter with WPA depression era work in two post offices. I also studied under Professor James Trissel.

While a high school student, I applied for admission into the School of the Art Institute of Chicago; I quickly received a rejection letter. Soon after, I began working for the New York Central Railroad, but not long after I started work I received a draft notice from the U.S. Government and entered the U.S. Army. By January 1968, I was fighting in Vietnam. I would spend just a few weeks short of one year there.

After receiving my Bachelor of Arts degree from Colorado College, I moved to Denver and began looking for work. I soon found work as a draftsman with KRMA-TV Denver's public TV station. During the 1970s and 1980s I was a member of Denver's co-op gallery, Pirate. At the Pirate Gallery all painters, printmakers, sculptors, and found object artists learned from one another. We had access to the gallery throughout the year to show our work. During this time, I also was influenced by the collection of Southwest art at the Denver Art Museum. I studied the paintings of the Taos school and the vast Native American art collection including pottery and Navajo Rugs. When I could afford it, I spent time in New York City. I found a print gallery in the West Village and they showed my print work. I also studied the many artists of the then 1980s popular, Neo Expression movement.

After my wife and I married in 1976, we visited Taos, New Mexico. While there, we splurged on a wedding gift to ourselves: we purchased a drawing by Andrew Dasburg for \$600. During this time, Andrew Dasburg was still living and working in Taos, he was over 90 years old. Dasburg was an early member of the Taos art colony and showed in Mabel Dodge Luhan's salon. I knew his work from the Denver and the Colorado Springs art museums and I very much liked and studied his art. I was thrilled to now own a piece of his work.

While living in Denver I painted in my garage and during the winter months, my basement. I sold art through the Inkfish Gallery, but never enough to pay the bills. I soon realized that except for a very few people, it was *almost* impossible to make a living selling art, so I started a business selling silk screened and embroidered

apparel. My first break came when I sold the Winter Park Ski area their staff embroidered polo shirts, jackets, hats and rugby shirts.

Over the next 25 years my wife and I raised a family, but sadly over ten years ago I began taking care of my wife after she became ill. She eventually lost her battle with cancer in 2012. During this absence from oil painting I continued to draw and I also painted watercolors. I also wrote and published a book titled, *From Chicago to Vietnam: A Memoir of War.*

After an absence, I am back oil painting. I live in Chicago where I can walk to the Art Institute of Chicago and view some of the same artwork that impressed me as a child. As a boy, the first time I saw the landscapes and cityscapes of Edward Hopper I wanted to paint, just like him. I have come full circle with my art and will continue to draw paint and travel through the halls of the Art Institute.