



left, Noble Watchman, oil on board, 18" x 12"
above, A Dramatic Retreat, oil on board, 24" x 27"

To Find What You Love

written by Brett Anningson

When it came time to decide what to do with his life, Jerry Markham took to heart some great advice from his stepfather, Stuart, who had made his living playing in a band for many years. Jerry recalls, "I told him I wanted to be a painter and Stuart said, "Find something you love to do and

the money will come." That stuck with me when I told other people I wanted to be a painter and they asked if I could make a living doing that, or if I had something to fall back on."

Jerry was born in Innisfail, Alberta, and lived in northern Alberta until moving to Airdrie (near Calgary) at age 13. "Playing hockey, high school football and any other sport that would get me





previous spread, Prairie Dusk, oil on board, 10" x 15"
above, Gone Fishing, oil on board, 24" x 28"



Beyond The Bounds, oil on board, 36" x 48"

out of class was my focus for the most part," he admits. "And, although I took art class in school, it was not my intention to make it a career – until grade 12. Following high school, I attended Alberta College of Art and Design for one semester, then stopped painting and became a commercial roofer for a few years, which was definitely good money for an uneducated 18-year-old, but also hard work."

Being a roofing contractor was a seasonal job and obviously not a long-term goal. One year, while he was off work from construction during a particularly cold and snowy Calgary winter, Jerry did a little painting. He notes, "That is when I met Doug Swinton, owner of Swinton's Art Supply & Instruction. I went into the art store for supplies and came out with a job. Working there got me excited about painting again and I started to think that maybe doing this for a living could be

possible. My wife Leah was working full time, and we had managed to pay off her student loans, so I thought it might be time to take another crack at this "being an artist" thing."

Doug Swinton introduced Jerry and Leah to Jean and Dean Geddes – Jean is also a professional artist from Calgary. Jerry says, "Jean and Dean taught us about the business of being an artist. We learned how to price paintings, approach galleries, form relationships with collectors, and so much more. Jean was also my painting teacher. She taught me how to paint what I see. In fact, Jean taught me to 'see' for the first time, which was a huge moment in my painting process. She also taught me about mixing and applying paint, but the biggest thing she taught me was to take painting seriously; if I wanted to make it my job I had better treat it as a job. This is when I started painting eight hours a day, whether I liked it or not."

The journey then began in earnest. Jerry immersed himself in art, soaking up the knowledge of every teacher who gave a course at the art store. He was interested in everything, and each teacher had a different idea, but Jerry managed to navigate his way through and out the other side with his own sense of style and purpose. "At that point I was ready to start finding my own voice and style as an artist," he explains. "I realized that to paint solely on evenings and weekends was not going to be enough to progress quickly enough to turn it into a career. So I started painting more, and working less at the store."

Struggling Through To Success

Then came the hardest five years of Jerry's life. A time filled with self-doubt, little success and a lot of painting. There were painting trips and excursions to the mountains, time spent in

contemplation, and the continuing support of Doug Swinton.

"Doug and I decided to go on a road trip to see artists Bill Reese and Clyde Aspevig in the United States," says Jerry. "Meeting Bill and his wife Fran changed the trajectory of my painting journey again. They had done it – they were the first people I had met that had made a life and supported a family by creating pictures. They were also very welcoming and happy to show us their collection, including paintings by Matt Smith, Ramon Kelly, Richard Schmid, Sergei Bongart, Bob Kuhn, Edgar Payne and many others. It was awe inspiring. We ended up staying for dinner and meeting again the next day, which was the beginning of a mind-expanding relationship. It was the freedom that really appealed to me; being able to carve out one's own lifestyle, even though I knew it wouldn't be easy."



Э.А. Мухоморов



previous spread, Return of the Hunter's Moon, oil on board, 22" x 28"
above, Two's Company, oil on board, 16" x 20"



right, Song of the Red-Winged Black Bird, oil on board, 30" x 18"

Jerry returned home with renewed vigour to create the lifestyle he wanted as an artist. He continued to paint and did some teaching from a converted garage, while Leah started an online marketing company working from home.

Today Jerry's studio is separate from the house, in a quiet rural neighbourhood overlooking Lake Okanagan; the kind of place that allows him to get into the right frame of mind without many outside influences. Except for the deer, bear and other wildlife that wander by on occasion. The studio has a scenic view in all four seasons, close to the mountain, and inside it is filled with paintings by other artists.

"There are a lot of painting props in the studio, such as pots, fabrics, jars and whats-its," says Jerry,

"as well as art books, vintage goalie equipment, sculptures, and photos of family and friends. I guess the most special thing I have in there is my Grandfather's chair and a sweater he wore whenever we did woodworking together in his shop. It reminds me of his integrity and the hard worker he was, and that inspires me to be better."

Seeing It Through

"My process is dependent upon inspiration and the desired result for the painting," says Jerry, "meaning the process itself changes based on what I want to say and how I want to say it with each piece. Painting from life or outdoors may require a faster, more direct approach with little or no pre-planning or preconceived ideas. Other times, I have



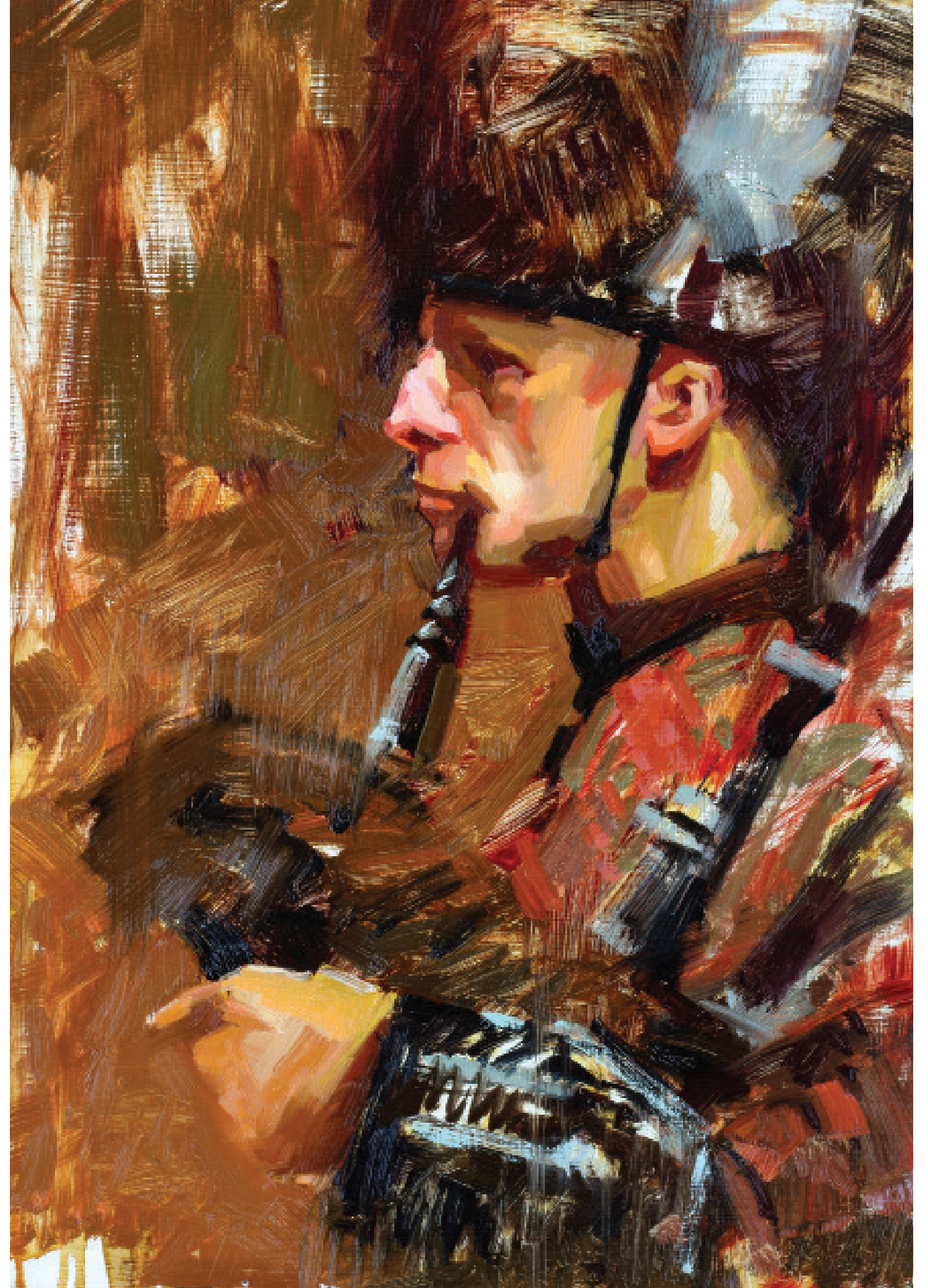
left, Red and White Arrangement, oil on board, 20" x 16"
above, Scarlet Chair, oil on board, 20" x 24"

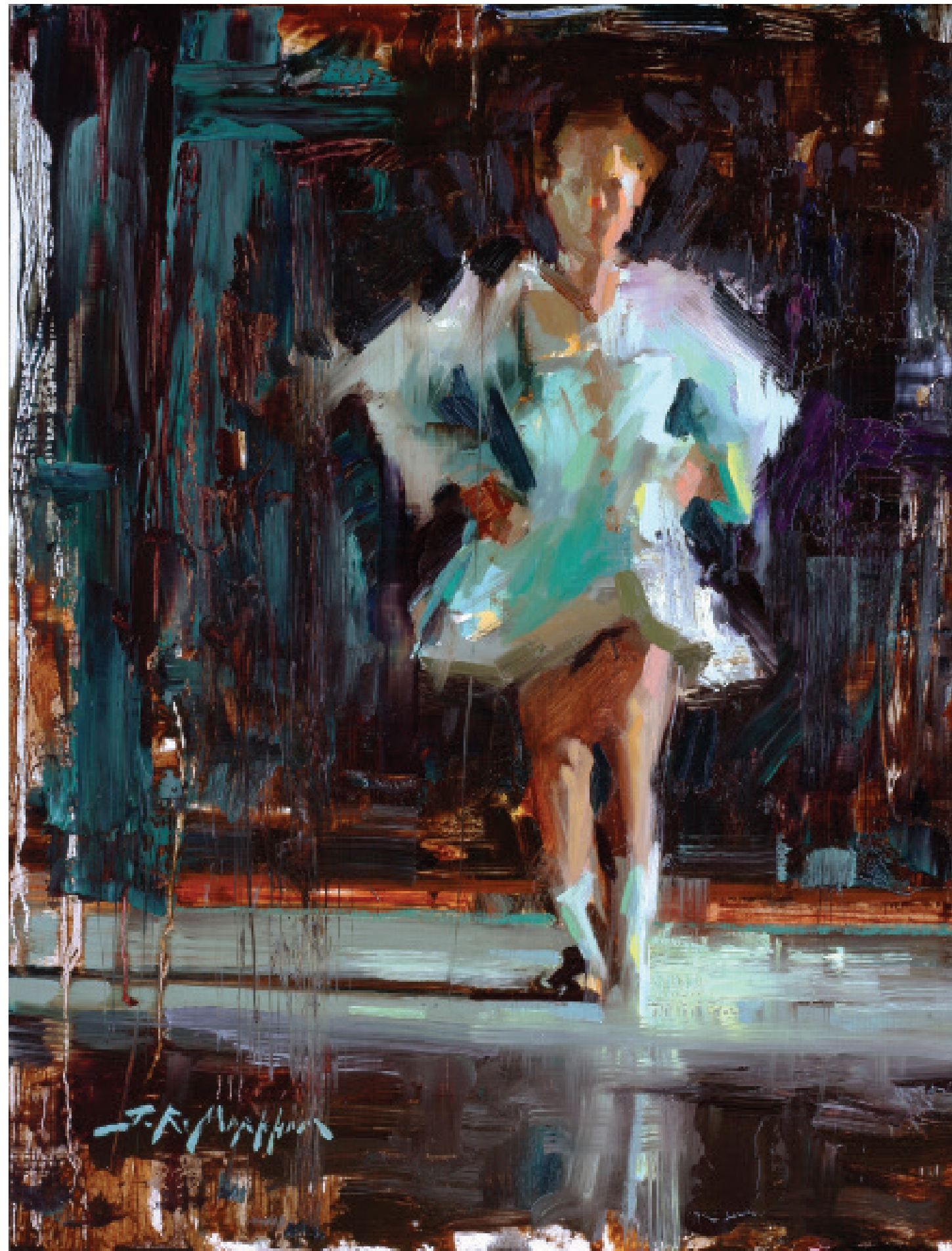
an idea in my mind which requires hiring models, or travelling to a specific location, or taking photos to develop the idea. Sometimes the inspiration is a colour, an application of paint, or making marks, and the subject becomes secondary. As for the painting process, in general it is fat over lean – starting with thin paint and building it up to thicker paint at the end; trying to balance form and content that is aesthetically pleasing, yet creative."

The content tends to be as varied and interesting as the man, himself. It truly is whatever captures his interest and artistic eye. Jerry is continually pushing the boundaries, experimenting with compositions and lighting, while trying to capture that elusive moment of inspiration to share with the world.

He explains, "I like to start out quite loose and somewhat abstract, allowing the picture to evolve in front of me. Trying not to get too bossy with the paint; allowing it room to move while pulling out the form of the whole. I feel this helps keeps the painting from getting too tight or content driven. For me, a looser painting allows the viewer to access it through their own filter, rather than dictate to them what to see. I have found paintings like this more interesting to view, so I try to paint that way. It is a challenge to keep it loose, yet keep the drawing accurate without getting too tight with the process, but I am learning. It is the struggle to balance form and content."

Although he is reticent to directly define his





style, preferring to leave that for others to decide, Jerry admits that his wife would say he is defined by a determination that borders on obsession. He adds, "Often, a problem I am trying to overcome within my work will inspire a lot of paintings, as I try to get better at that specific part. The journey to the perfect picture, which I know does not exist, is what inspires me to paint again and again. The subject or content is often not the inspiration, it is the form of a thing, and how to depict it in a picture that is creative and aesthetically pleasing."

To see more of Jerry Markham's inspired work visit www.jerryarkham.com

Jerry Markham is represented by:

Peninsula Gallery
Sidney, BC
www.pengal.com
250.655.1282

previous spread left, *Classic Gentlemen*,
oil on board, 30" x 24"

previous spread right, *Proud Piper*,
oil on board, 10" x 14"

left, *To Her Heart's Content*,
oil on board, 36" x 20"

right, *Tiny Dancer*,
oil on board, 14" x 11"