



left, Garden Dance, oil on canvas, 36" x 24"
above, Paintbrush and Larch, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"

Generations of Artistic Brilliance

written by Nadia Tersigni

Certainty. A word which conjures up ideals of sureness, and Robert E. Wood was definitely certain from his earliest childhood memories that his calling was to be an artist. Paint and paintbrushes were a fascination, and the walls of his home his blank canvas. As he fondly recalls, "Since my parents couldn't stop me from colouring on the walls, they eventually gave in and permitted it, but limited me to colouring on the walls of just one room of the house! Also when I was a young kid my grandfather called me "the little painter". So I think it was always obvious to everyone else – as well as to myself – that I was born to be an artist."

Having grown up in North Vancouver, B.C.,

much of Robert's childhood was spent in the Okanagan Valley, until the age of 13 when his family moved to Alberta – a place he has called home for the past 30 years.

As a third generation artist – his father was Karl E. Wood and his grandfather Robert E. Wood – Robert was encouraged, and driven, to paint. In speaking of the period of his life following high school graduation, Robert explains, "I spent the summer working in a video store (basically, just a summer job) until my Dad said to me one day 'If you want to paint, just do it. Stop wasting your time.' Can't get much clearer than that, can you? The fates were speaking. I gave my notice the next day, and I began painting professionally in November of 1989, working with my Dad every day learning the art of painting from him...Eight months later he passed away suddenly. So the moral of the story is: Just do it; and don't waste your time (Literally – don't waste your time here on this Earth!). If I hadn't started painting when I did, I could easily have missed out on those intensive eight months of training with him, and it would have been that much harder for me to get my career launched."



above, Garden Bouquet, oil on canvas, 24" x 30"
 right, Daisies & Paintbrush, oil on canvas, 48" x 36"



The journey takes shape

Having been in the unique position to be surrounded by art mentors such as his father and grandfather, Robert acknowledges that there have also been other artists who have had a hand in shaping his journey. He shares that one of the most important influences in his life continues to be Harold L. Lyon, a world renowned Western painter, whom to this day keenly shares his expert knowledge in the world of art and inspires with his focus on diverse subject matter.

"There was also a group of artists I frequently went on plein-air painting trips with for many, many years, who were also influential to my artistic development, including Jean Geddes and Alice "Jimmie" Miller. Jimmie passed away now, and our painting group has never really recovered from the loss of her momentum – she really was a wonderful person. She also had a genius eye for painting critique – she could look at a painting for a few minutes and then identify the one key element that needed improvement, and in my experience she was always right. It's a joy to remember her."

Robert also acknowledges the strong influence imparted by artist Mannie Gonsalves who served

as a great critic. "The key thing you have to know about Mannie is that he lacked the part of the brain which keeps most of us from saying everything we think...Opinionated would be an understatement! But when he told you something, you listened, because he was very knowledgeable and very honest."

Sacred spaces

Robert's studio serves as an oasis of inspiration, greatly influencing his works. Working solely during daylight hours amidst much light, Robert shares that his productivity is affected in the winter months when Canadian daylight hours tend to be much shorter. To compensate, he has filled his studio with many objects which hold deep meaning. A personal look into his creative space produces the scene of a display of items that belonged to his father and grandfather, as well as a large collection of art books at the ready for delving into. "Some artists liken their studios to sacred spaces, and I think that's quite a good comparison."

A work in progress

Surrounded by a variety of studio tools - antiques and Mahl sticks having been graced by





previous spread, Pacific Horizon, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"
above, Majestic Giant Steps, oil on canvas, 48" x 60"



Sundown - Ya Ha Tinda, oil on canvas, 48" x 60"

the use of his father and grandfather's artistic hands - Robert shares how his technique has developed and changed through the course of his career, spanning from experiencing a gradual shift to an "overnight implementation of new thoughts and approaches."

When working within his studio, Robert says his ideas usually permeate his mind in the morning hours as he prepares to commence his artistic work. As he begins the process of questioning himself as to what he "feels" like painting, the answer is complemented by a binder of photographs which he browses through until inspiration is achieved. "The subject usually dictates the size it would be best painted. How long it takes depends on the complexity of the subject, the size of the canvas, and - of course - how well the work goes."

Beginning with an under-painting of acrylic paint, followed by the final oil paint, Robert expertly mixes colours using a brush, with a deliberate intent to under-mix his chosen colour, serving to enhance the intensity and variation of it.

"My favorite medium is oil paint, which I've worked with predominantly throughout my career. But I've also dabbled in Acrylic, Gouache, Watercolour, and Pen & Ink drawings. I've just been working on a series of Ink & Watercolour paintings on paper for my gallery in Mexico, which has been a lot of fun. But I always come back to Oils - there is just something luscious and rich about oil paint that other mediums lack."

Uniqueness defined

In a realm not much delved into, Robert has developed a fascination with what he explains as

"studies into the Eastern modalities concerning the energy fields in our bodies, and how that energy can transfer from us to other objects, and - of particular interest to me - how that can pertain to artists." While he admits that this line of reasoning may seem a little "out there" to some people, he shares, "What it comes down to is the importance for artists to imbue their work with positive energy while it's being created, and how that energy is picked up by people viewing the work: it never goes away; the energy of the artist remains with the piece...I think it also has quite a lot to do with why certain artists are more successful, and some aren't. It's the law of karma: the universe returns the same energy to us that we put out. You reap what you sow."

"I think quite a lot of artists get typecast (rather like actors) into painting a fairly narrow specialized

line of subject matter, because that's what people expect from them and then - ultimately - it's all that people will buy from them. From the outset of my career I knew I was going to be primarily a landscape artist, but I've always made a point of doing a huge variety of subject matter, and not being confined regionally...So while you can often say, 'That artist paints flowers', 'He paints horses', or 'She paints mountains', I'm a bit harder to define: I'm an everything artist!"

With a preference to follow his own inspiration, Robert has completed commissions, however, he states, "Commissions are a challenge - it's hard to see inside someone's mind and know what they're visualizing. I will do a commission, if there is a very clear example to follow, but generally I prefer to do my own thing."



left top, Highwood Country, oil on canvas, 24" x 48"
left bottom, In Paradise Valley, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"

above, Ya Ha Tinda Fall, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"

Taking Heed

Enjoying a career spanning more than 24 years, Robert has had his fair share of lessons learned. He freely admits that the life of an artist would be much easier with the addition of twice as many hours in each day. He strongly feels that the time spent in creating a visual masterpiece warrants an answer quite unique, and when posed the question "How long did it take you to paint that painting?" Robert responds, "The only accurate answer for me has to be 24+ years (or whatever the length of an artist's career has been), because we are really an accumulation of everything we've learned in our careers."

And in reference to learning the art of art itself, he shares, "Make sure you learn from the best! However you can – through classes, books, looking at paintings in galleries or online. Just learn from the best...We in the arts get better by doing it! If you want to be a painter you have to do it as much as you can, whenever you can, and in whatever circumstances confront you. And you have to keep on doing it. And don't get discouraged if you fail – we all fail – but accept the challenge and

pick up the brushes again with fresh and focused inspiration and positive energy the next day."

"I think it's very valuable for an artist to be able to accept criticism, when it comes from people whose work and knowledge you respect. I've known a few artists who could be a lot better if they accepted criticism, instead of thinking they know it all. That's the most exciting thing about painting – we never know it all! Like life itself, we're constantly on a journey of learning and growth...or at least we should be."

Beyond the visual artist – literally!

When Robert is not found painting, he is teaching an oil painting class, managing the Gainsborough Galleries in downtown Calgary, or engaging in his passion for writing. "I think it's so valuable to pursue another creative outlet that allows my mind to have a different focus, as a break from painting, and I've always loved writing. I predominantly write non-fiction (although lately I've also been doing quite a lot of screenplay work). A lot of my books have been connected to theatrical history, and one of my most recent books is



above, Yamnuska Moon, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"
below, Sunset Breakers , oil on canvas, 24" x 36"



above, Majestic Castle Mountain, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"
below, Pacific Evening, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"





previous spread, Winter Dawn, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"
right, Mount Patterson, oil on canvas, 24" x 30"

called "Valiant for Truth", which pays tribute to actor Barry Morse's lifelong connection and dedication to playwright George Bernard Shaw. It's alternately dramatic and humorous and provides a fascinating account of Morse's life and career as a Shavian, including his time as Artistic Director of the Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, and as President of the Shaw Society of England."

For the love of art
Robert's journey in the world of creating his artistic masterpieces is often fueled by inspiration and the joy of providing the viewer with an experience in which they may lose themselves, if only for a moment.

"I only paint scenes that I am captivated and inspired by; sometimes they are the kinds of things that make you stop and do a double-take because they're so dramatic, and other times it's a subtle or quiet beauty that most people would just pass right by without taking notice...that's all part of the artist's job, or at least what I take the artist's job to be: to show people the beauty all around them."

To view more of the works of Robert E. Wood visit www.robertewood.ca. Work can be seen at

Webster Galleries
625 77 Ave SE Unit 2,
Calgary, AB T2H 2B9
(403) 278-3074
<https://www.webstergalleries.com/>



Artist to Collect

Robert E. Wood



written by Debra Usher

Robert E. Wood is in the unusual position of being a third generation artist. His grandfather Robert E. Wood (1919-1980) and father Karl E. Wood (1944-1990) surrounded him with art and artists and thus it was as natural as walking for him to begin creating canvasses of wonderment at a young age. In the earliest photo available of Robert, he is a toddler clutching a paintbrush. His grandfather's nickname for him was "the little painter."

It seems that for Robert, his life's calling was predetermined.

right now, and he will be 80 this December," says Robert. "I can only hope to have his energy and continue to be as inspired by painting as he is when I'm 80. I have always loved Harold's style, and am proud to have several of his paintings in my collection."

Just doing it

But Robert has also learned a huge amount about art by just doing it for 21 years. Robert says, "The actual practice of creating paintings and working, sometimes by trial and error, is the ultimate teacher."

To Robert, his studio and surroundings are very



Autumn Falls, palette knife oil on canvas, 15" x 30"

Robert began working full time as an artist in 1989, when he was just 18. He was fortunate to spend the first eight months training with his father, who died early in 1990. Those eight months formed the foundation for the rest of Robert's career.

Since then, Robert has learned a great deal from other artists. One in particular is Harold Lyon. Robert says that apart from his father and grandfather, Harold is the one artist who has influenced his career the most. He and Robert's father were great friends and so Harold has known him since he was three or four years old. Robert credits Harold with helping him to develop his art after his dad passed away.

"He is a great artist, and an inspiration as he is creating some of the best paintings of his career

important. Over the years he has had quite a few different studios, the largest being the one he worked in with his dad. It was a converted four-car garage that had room for an office, a living room and ample storage space for frames, canvasses and supplies. It even featured a pool table. When he was living in an apartment condo he had such a small studio that he would have to leave the studio room, cross the entry hall and go into the kitchen to get a decent view of what he was painting. Mercifully, he didn't stay in that condo for long. Today he is building a new home and studio that he should be in by the time this story goes to print.

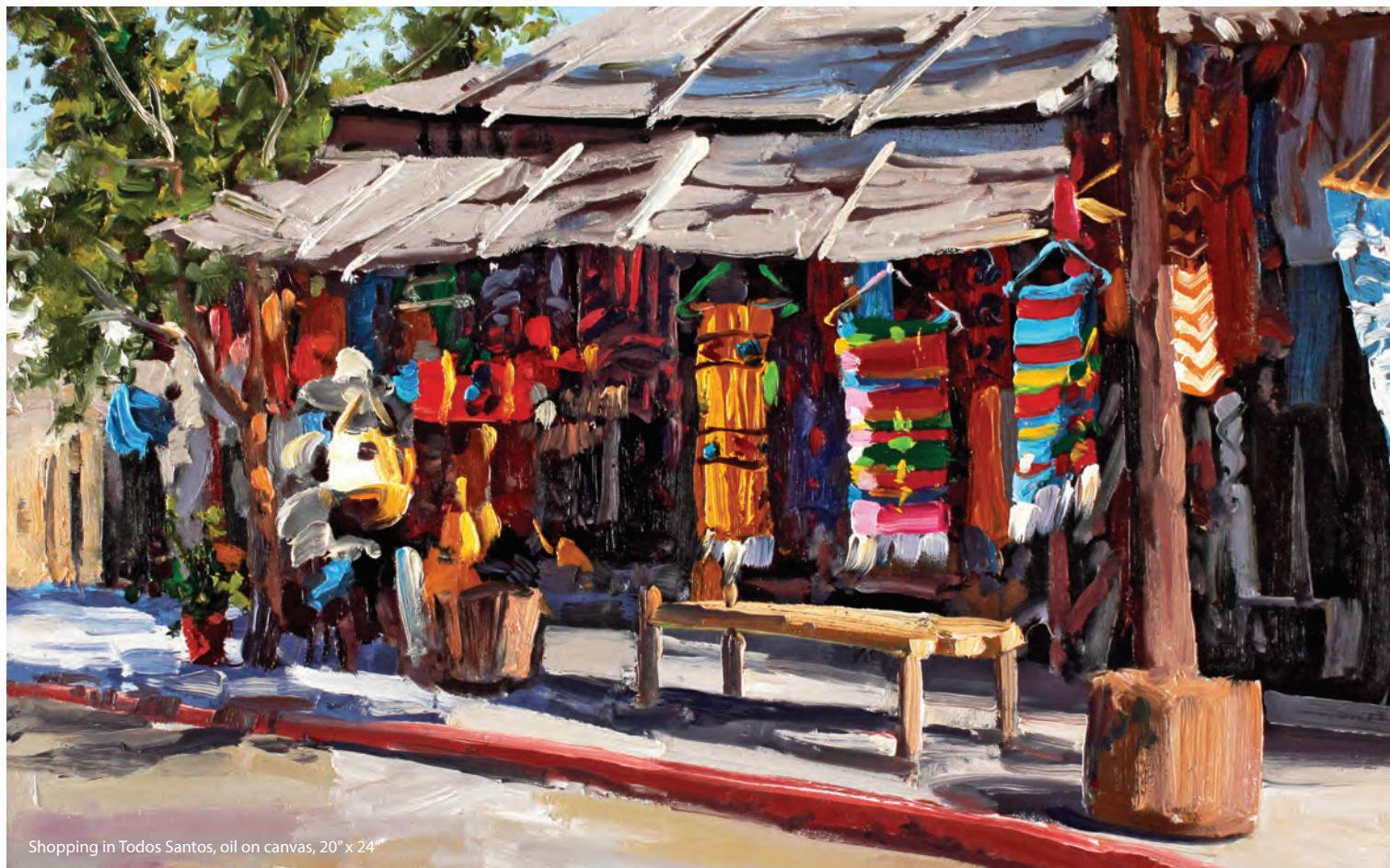
First and foremost in importance when creating a workspace is the lighting, says Robert. He prefers halogen lights as he finds the paint colours react



The Sunday Times - London, oil on canvas, 18" x 24"



Rest A While (Todos Santos), oil on canvas, 24" x 30"



Shopping in Todos Santos, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"



Saturday Market – St. John's, Antigua, oil on canvas, 20" x 36"

under them similarly as they do under natural sunlight, and these are also the kind of lights usually found in art galleries.

Regarding natural light, Robert goes against the traditional approach of artists, who generally prefer the northern light. His opinion is that this long-standing northern light tradition was developed in a region of the world that wasn't quite as northerly as Canada. North light may be consistent, he concedes, but it is also consistently dull in his Calgary home, especially in the winter.

Robert states, "I far prefer southern exposure. It is much brighter year-round, and with the use of white blinds or curtains I can diffuse the

that can be said or painted about subjects like those, so I almost never do them."

Uncommon mountains

Robert has always loved nature, and really enjoys hiking in the mountains, so he tends to paint mountain and landscape scenes of lesser-known places. They are probably what he is most well known for. They often look more beautiful on Robert's canvas than any mountains seen when just driving by and looking at them with the naked eye. He loves to capture nature in out-of-the-way locations and show its beauty to new audiences.

To avoid being typecast as an artist who



Fresh Snow (Ghost River Country), oil on canvas, 40" x 72"

brightness as much as I like. I also like to have a comfortable sitting area where I can relax and study the painting on my easel. It's very valuable to be able to simply spend time looking at a painting, examining it, and identifying subtle alterations that need to be made."

The work of Robert E. Wood is inspired by what he loves. It's very simple for Robert, if he doesn't love something, he is not going to paint it. Robert states, "I'm sure I could sell endless paintings of prairie grain elevators, but I'm not a prairie person. Or I could paint all of the standard famous mountain scenes like the Three Sisters or Lake Louise, over and over again, like some artists do, but unless I can bring something unique and interesting to it, I'm not going to do it. And it isn't very often that there is something new and fresh

specializes in one area, Robert has always painted a variety of subjects – florals, cityscapes, old buildings, ranches, figures, wildlife, seascapes and anything else that catches his eye and sparks inspiration. People are often amazed at the breadth of subjects that Robert paints.

Robert says, "I'm very pleased that my customers purchase all of the various subjects I paint and find beauty in the subjects that catch my eye. And when people ask, 'What do you call yourself – a landscape painter?' I'm happy to say, 'I'm an everything painter'."

Robert says, "I always think you can tell a lot about an artist's personality by looking at the work they create. Are they loose, spontaneous, and fun? Or are they uptight, rigid, stiff? Are they dull, or are they vibrant? I've found it's true of the people, as

well as their work. I've got a lot of colours in me, and I want to be able to share them all."

Robert is always surrounded by paintings of his beloved father and grandfather. Their presence is a reminder of the work ethic that must be maintained by any professional artist. He says he thinks of them both every day. In his studio he also has a couple of model ships that his grandfather built. Robert's dad built model airplanes, but unfortunately he doesn't have any of his models.

"I also have a collection of items related to an actor whom I was very close friends with for about 15 years, called Barry Morse. He passed away in 2008, and again, not a day goes by when I don't think of him. He was a combination of mentor and father and grandfather figure, and one of the greatest friends I will ever know on this planet. I was lucky enough to work with him on no less than 15 different stage, television and radio productions, as well as co-authoring his memoirs and several other books related to his career.

"Indeed, I'm still working on a couple of books related to his career, and helping to carry on his legacy. So in my studio I have several signed photographs and posters from various projects that Barry starred in over the years. And just like the items I have from my dad and grandfather, the pieces which remind me of Barry are a source of constant inspiration."

Loves wow factor

Robert loves to see an artist who can paint something that makes him stop and say, "Wow." It can be technique, composition, colour or mood that captures his attention.

There are other artists that Robert is always impressed by. He says that American Clyde Aspevig is likely the greatest landscape painter working today. Every painting of his invites you to linger and savour the scene in front of you, and his work is always authentic, Robert says. He also admires the technique of American Richard Schmid and the work of another American, James Reynolds, whom he calls "an incredible colourist." Sadly he passed away earlier this year.

When Robert is not painting he is most often writing. He has written or co-authored eight books and has several more in the works. He also works a couple of days each week in the Gainsborough Galleries in downtown Calgary. A lot of artists are quite insulated, and Robert has known a number who are fairly anti-social. But Robert is different



Morning Surf, oil on canvas, 24" x 36"



Cautious Moment, oil on canvas, 24" x 36"



Moving Through, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"



July's Meadow, oil on canvas, 48" x 60"



Rocky Mountain Meadows, oil on canvas, 36" x 48"



Alpine Flowers (Glacier National Park), oil on canvas, 30" x 40"

and loves interacting with people who are interested in art, and the connection that he has with art buyers has helped guide him to produce art that people enjoy.

"My actor friend Barry Morse always said that the first thing anyone in the arts must do is admit that we are all shoplifters. But, as Barry said, once you acknowledge that fact, when you set out on one of your shoplifting expeditions, always remember to go to Cartier and never to WalMart. In other words, only seek to learn from, or be inspired by, the very best."

When Robert rolls up his sleeves and gets to work, he prefers to paint on site. But, living in Alberta, this isn't always possible because of the sometimes stormy weather, so he more often works in his studio, choosing from a vast collection of over 50,000 photographs and slides for inspiration.

"The first step is to enter the studio in the morning, and glance at the photo albums — do I feel like an autumn forest, or a winter mountain? A Mexican desert scene, or a London pub? I select a few binders, and then flip through images until just the right subject leaps out at me.

Many of the photos Robert has taken himself, and some he inherited from his father.

He works from a white canvas and begins by doing an under painting in acrylic thinned to the consistency of watercolour. The under painting begins in monochromatic shades of gray and then progresses to either partial or full colour. In this way, by the end of the relatively fast acrylic under-painting process, he has created an accurate representation of what the final painting will look like.

Switching then to oils, he has a four-step process for painting. First, he paints the darkest dark. Second, he paints the lightest light. Third, he paints everything in shadow. And finally, he paints everything in light.

Robert is fascinated with the lighting within a painting.

"Light is certainly what makes me stop and do a double take when I see a striking scene. And so I have always been driven to capture light in my work. As an artist it's a great challenge — what is the essence of light? How is it best portrayed through the use of both colour and tone value? I have a painting of a sunset in my studio right now that is, I think, very effective at capturing a true sense of light. Even sitting in a darkened room, that painting feels as if it is lit from within."

Non-toxic materials

All Robert's materials are non-toxic. He almost never adds thinner to the paint as it comes out of the tube. When he does, it is only ever walnut alkyd medium, or simply walnut oil.

"Working with non-toxic materials is important to me, and therefore I never use any of the traditional oil painter's mediums and cleaners, such things as turpentine, Liquin, and every other medium, thinner and cleaner sold to artists, because they are virtually all toxic. When I clean my brushes and palette, I use ordinary vegetable oil. You can use whatever you have in your kitchen – canola oil, corn oil or grape seed oil. At the end of the day you can either wash your brushes out

learn, the less I know."

In his 20-plus years painting professionally, he has dabbled in many mediums. He has worked with acrylic, watercolour, gouache, pencil, charcoal, conte, and pen and ink, but he always comes back to oil paint.

"It has a luscious aspect to it that is lacking in every other medium, a richness, a truth to its colours, and a versatility that lends itself to countless approaches."

He very rarely accepts commission work, except when he feels a personal connection to the subject.

When he puts down his paintbrushes, his favourite thing to do is to entertain friends at home, cooking and sharing fine food and wine.

His favourite food is good quality Mexican. Not the typical Tex-Mex, or the basic tacos that everyone thinks of when they think of Mexican food, but the really gorgeous, complex and fresh flavours found in what he calls "gourmet Mexican."

"That said, my single favourite dish originates from Spain, and is a good paella. There are endless variations of paella, but I love a classic seafood variation, and if I'm making it at home I'll usually throw in some chicken and chorizo as well as the seafood."

His favourite wines come from the Okanagan Valley in BC. He cites the winery See Ya' Later Ranch, which produces his favourite white, Gewurztraminer, and his favorite red, Pinot Noir. He also likes Inskillin Okanagan. His favourite white from them is their Marsanne Rousanne and his favourite red is their Zinfandel.

Travelling to the Caribbean and Mexico is another passion. He purchased a property in Todos Santos, Baja California Sur in Mexico a few years ago and plans to build a house there and make it his full-time home.

Back in Canada, his favourite restaurant is Cilantro on 17th Avenue in Calgary. However, his favourite restaurant in the world is Il Giardino in Todos Santos, Baja, Mexico. This is an open-air restaurant with heavenly Italian food with the occasional twist of Mexican.

At home, his favourite recipe to cook and serve is cilantro soup, once again, taken from the gourmet Mexican genre.

Whether he is painting, living or cooking, Robert clearly always seeks out heat and light.

Robert's work can be found at Webster Galleries, 625 77 Ave SE Unit 2, Calgary, AB T2H 2B9, (403) 278-3074 <https://www.webstergalleries.com/>



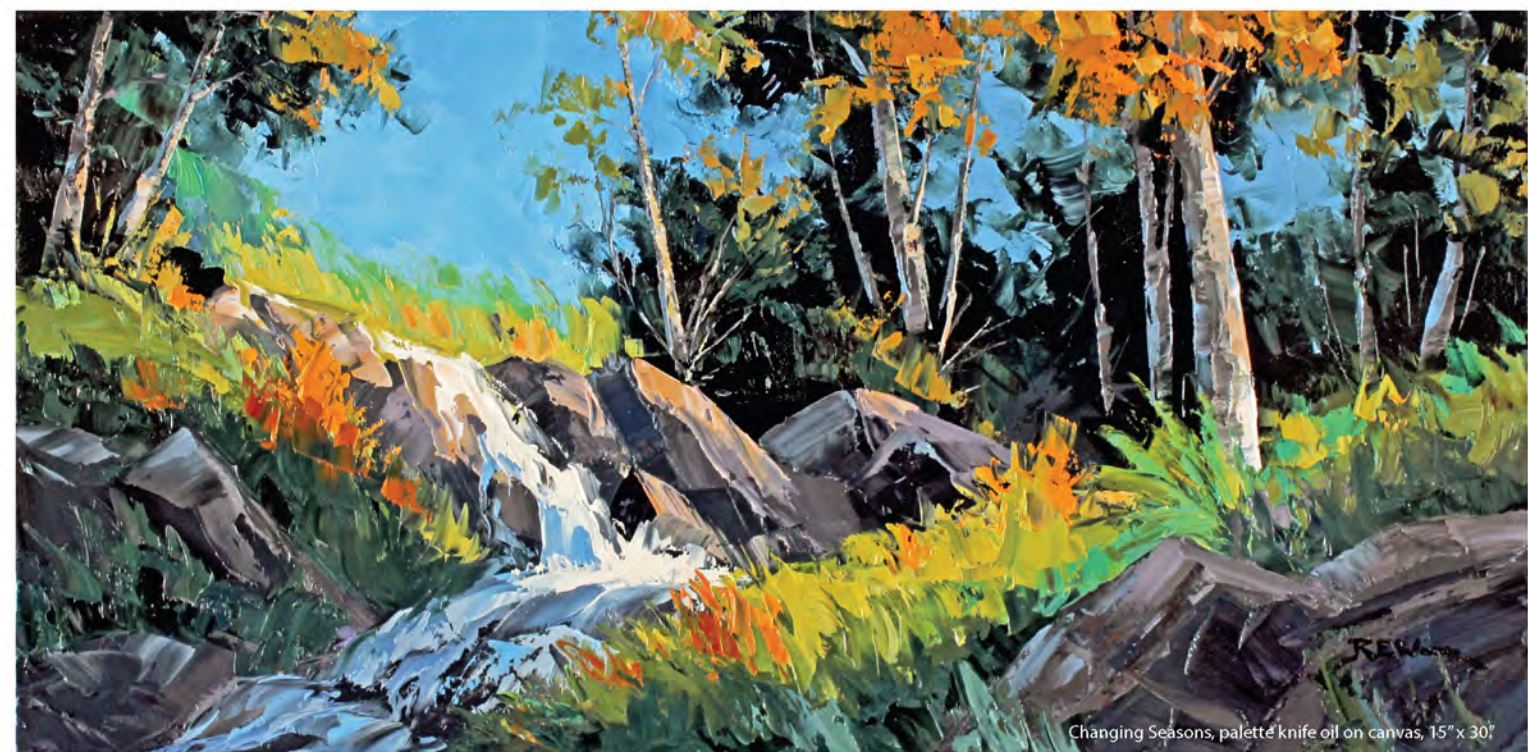
artist Robert E. Wood

with soap and water, or simply lay them with the bristles submerged in a small amount of oil in a rectangular Tupperware container. That's what I do. The next day, you simply take the brush out of the oil, wipe the bristles off, and start painting again. Just be careful not to get the various vegetable oils into your paint because they will take forever to dry."

He says that the hardest thing about being an artist is that it proves the old saying, "The more I



Country Road, oil on canvas, 24" x 30"



Changing Seasons, palette knife oil on canvas, 15" x 30"