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art Challenge

All the Prize Winners in our *International Artist Magazine* Challenge No. 109

FLORAL & GARDENS



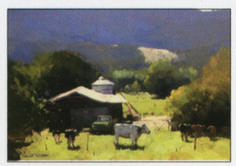
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PLUS THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION & HARD WORK *with Colley Whisson*



Second Prize

Paul Baldassini

Connecticut, USA, *Raspberry Clowns & Festiva Maxima,* oil, 24 3/8 x 37 1/4 (62 x 95 cm)

Second Prize is a two-page editorial in *American Art Collector* magazine

My Inspiration

Most of what I paint these days are flowers — peonies and roses in particular. I am awed by the mathematics of repeating patterns underlying their beauty and I methodically seek to reveal the intricacy and elegance of their design. Like so much of the natural world, flower blossoms grow and develop according to the mathematics of precise logarithmic spirals, increasing in size but never changing their shape, ever growing without ever changing proportions. Their color and variety command my attention while the blossoming of a flower triggers the sense that something miraculous is coming. I don't have to travel very far to find them — many private and public flower gardens are just a short drive from my studio.

My Design Strategy

The paintings I create are based on a composite of many images. They rely on a natural aptitude in design and composition, competence in photography, drawing, and the craft of oil painting. Like much great art, they are a combination of fact and fiction. My sketchbook is a digital camera with a macro lens which I use to create compelling compositions that combine rhythm and repetition with light and shadow effects. As a designer and image editor for most of my professional career of more than 40 years, I use digital technology to examine and edit, larger than life, the flowers I photograph. I spend hours exploring the design possibilities before I put brush to canvas.

My Working Process

Much like the old masters, I use a structured approach. After working out my ideas to create a compelling composition, I carefully transfer my design to the panel, often taking up to four hours. I begin the underpainting using quinacridone Mmagenta and odorless mineral spirits, much like a watercolor, adding and removing paint as necessary. When dry, I begin the overpainting using the direct method and a palette of 14 colors, painting a section at a time. Each new section is seamlessly blended into the previously painted section with minimal or no reworking of previously painted passages. This method allows me to focus completely on color mixing to achieve the right combination of color, value and temperature to model forms, create depth and accurately render nuances of light and shadow.

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