

## JOSEPH SUNDWALL

PORTRAITS & OIL PAINTINGS

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Joseph Sundwall was born in 1948 and raised near Chicago when the arts were still considered an essential part of a child's education (his first oil was painted in third grade). When it came time for college he chose the Kansas City Art Institute with the intention of majoring in painting, but after getting a taste of other arts in the first year foundation program, he became fascinated by the peculiar work being done in the graphic design department. The rigorous program was based on the design and color ideas Josef Albers had developed at Yale. It included color theory, composition, photography, typography and printing. Of key importance was the development of sensitivity to negative spaces, including the relationship of spaces between forms and within forms. Students were encouraged to consider design less a decorative art than one of problem solving, which should yield a solution relevant to the content and objectives of the problem. It was about being clear and simple in execution. And elegant. Minimalist.

After college, Joseph moved to New York City and worked for several years as a graphic designer and type designer before taking up the study of fine art again. He took oil painting courses at the Art Students League and the National Academy of Design, and at St. Oswald's Studios in London.

“The teachers I studied with were primarily portrait painters: David Leffel, Ron Scherr, Everett Kinstler, Charles Hardaker. I'd been painting portraits since I was a kid and always had good eye/hand coordination, patience with myself, curiosity about my materials, and a child's love of just watching how the work gets done; I'm still enthralled by the process of painting and because of my design background, I'm never **not** aware of the 'big picture' – how the central focus of the painting relates to the whole, whether I'm being direct or indirect, and whether the technique agrees with the inner intention of the work.

“Having focused for years on people portraits, on a lark I went to see a polo match and found myself captivated by the ponies – their beauty, intelligence and athleticism astonished the city boy in me. Before long I was painting polo and other equestrian events, including dressage, foxhunting, bassetting and horse racing, then all kind of hounds and birds and animals leapt into my work. I feel that I was somehow destined to paint the figure – humans and animals in motion and at rest.”

Today, Joseph divides his time between figure painting and landscape, usually including animals. As much as possible he paints from life, preferring the simple oil sketch as reference material to the use of photography, though it is indispensable for small children and animal subjects. And early this year he discovered a new subject: War of Independence reenactments. “Dedicated actors on foot and on horseback, period costume, and blue smoke issuing from muskets and cannon: it's like a movie,” Sundwall said recently, “only louder.”

His painting style relies in great part on wet-into-wet techniques, plus the juxtaposition of areas of flat paint with modeling and vigorous brushwork playing off areas of studied strokes. “I'm a realist painter,” Joseph says, “but more than just making things look ‘real,’ I'm interested in putting down no more than is necessary to get a point across... to discover what can be left out or merely implied; this requires more conscious involvement in the process of painting for me, and invites greater participation by the viewer when coming in for a closer look.”

Joseph has taught oil painting privately and at regional art associations in New Jersey. He demonstrates the art of portrait painting before art groups and at fairs. His work is to be found in many private collections in the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and in Europe. He lives in Bridgewater, NJ, and is represented by J. M. Stringer Galleries in Bernardsville, NJ and Vero Beach, FL.

### **Selected Juried Shows | 2003-2009**

New York: Allied Artists Grand National, American Artists Professional League

Pennsylvania: Philadelphia Sketch Club

New Jersey: Mountain Art Show, Somerset Art Assn., NJ Equine Artists Assn.,

The Ridgewood Art Institute

### **Notable Exhibits | Awards**

Solo Exhibition: Burnt Mills Gallery at the Ryland Inn (Whitehouse, NJ) '02-03

Solo Exhibition: "Great Chefs," depicting eight of the greatest chefs of the last 400 years

Solo Exhibition: Portraiture and Equine-related work, Chatfields (Gladstone, NJ) 9/03

Finalist: Portraiture competition for Artist's Magazine, 12/03 (13,000 entries)

Best in Show: Somerset Art Association Members Show, 1/04

Arthur F. Maynard Award: "Jester" (portrait), The Ridgewood Art Institute, 1/04

Best in Show: Mrs. Tara Sutherland (portrait), Juried Exhibit (Bernardsville Library, NJ) 4/04

Solo Exhibition: Windsor Gallery (Colt's Neck, NJ) 5/04

Grand Prize: "Mrs Kathleen McDermott with Lucy" National Juried Exhibition, Equine Artists, NJ

Col.G.Morales Award: "Jester" (portrait) - Allied Artists (Salmagundi Club, NYC) 10/04

Best in Show: "Craig Shelton" (portrait) - Connecticut Society of Portrait Artists (Old Lyme) 3/05

NJEAA Art of the Horse, Prallsville Mills (Stockton, NJ) 7/05

Solo Exhibition: "Faces", The Dillon Library (Bedminster, NJ) 8/05

Two-artist Exhibition: "BIG", The Dillon Library (Bedminster, NJ) 11/05

Two-artist Exhibition: "Harvest", The Purnell School (Pottersville, NJ) 12/05

Finalist: Animal painting competition, Artist's Magazine, 12/05

Award of Merit: "Art of the Horse", National juried show, NJ Equine Artists (Bedminster) 6/06

Solo Exhibition: "Faces & Places", The Bernardsville Library (NJ) 9/06

Second Place: "Mark Stocks" - Connecticut Society of Portrait Artists (Greenwich, CT) 2/08

Group Exhibitions: J.M. Stringer Gallery (Bernardsville, NJ) 10/07, 10/08, 10/09, 10/10, 12/11, 12/12

Dual Artist Exhibits: J.M. Stringer Gallery (Vero Beach, FL) 10/11, 4/13

Invitational Group Exhibit: "Horseplay", The Morris Museum (Morristown, NJ) 10/09

Open Juried Exhibit: American Academy of Equine Art (Lexington) 10/10

Group Exhibition: Connecticut Society of Portrait Artists "Faces of Winter" (Old Lyme) 3/11

Portrait of Walt Disney (posthumous) joins Players Club Hall of Fame collection (NYC) 4/11

## **Artist Statement**

When I go to a museum I'll pause just inside the doorway of each gallery and let my attention move around the room, observing which work brings my attention to rest; the one that does is the painting I'm drawn to first, and I know why: no matter what object, person or event is being depicted, the paintings that engage me are the ones that bring me to rest. In that stillness the painter's experience becomes my own and I am one with the original observer; the painting transcends time and place. This silent conversation with a work of art is what is important to me in viewing art, and informs my approach to making art.

Painting is a solitary, meditative activity. It's important that the work should arise not from agitation but stillness, and that the connection to the stillness be maintained throughout. What happens inside the artist is reflected in the finished work. How could it not?

My first love was portraiture. It was extremely difficult at first, so unlike painting or drawing some other object like a cloud or a tree, which are more or less interchangeable and never look the same way twice. But a fine likeness of a living subject, breathing in and out, present in space, observing the outer world through an inner world and captured in a moment of timeless time, now there's a challenge.