





ARTIST TIMOTHY GRANT

Variations on a Scene

PAINTINGS LARGE AND SMALL | BY BARBARA MACKAY



Timothy Grant

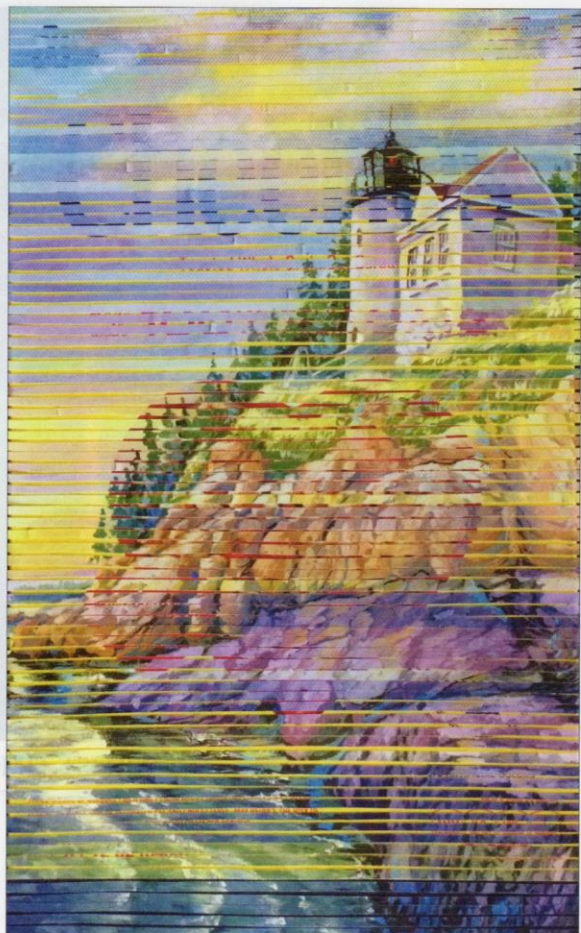
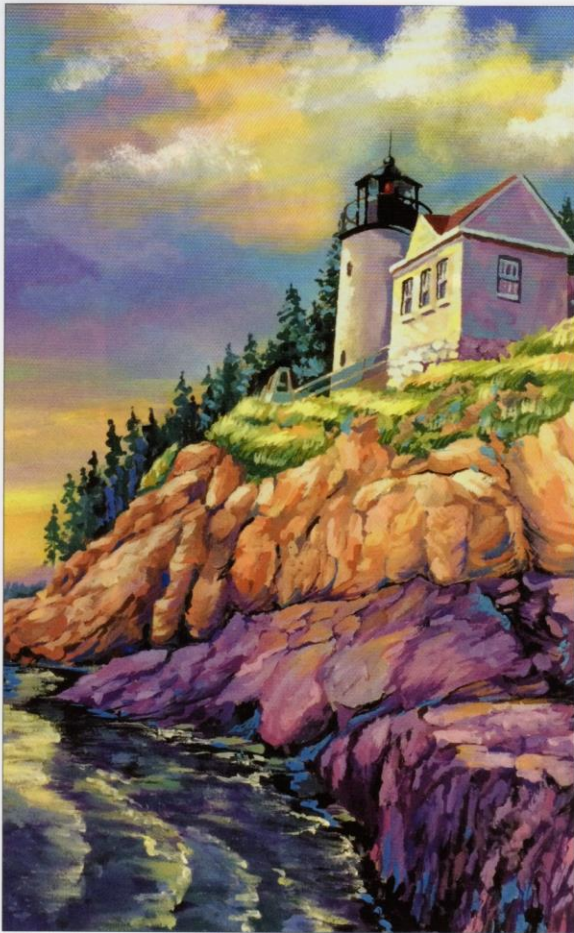
Reston resident Timothy Grant is an artist who has devoted his life to paintings, illustrations, murals and scenic design. Graduating from Pittsburgh's Point Park University in 1982, Tim went on to earn his M.A. in art history from the University of Pittsburgh in 1986. But his route from young man to artist was not typical.

"When I was about 16, I got into trouble," Tim explains. "I was sent to a youth detention center. The first thing they did there was give me a G.E.D. test. I passed it, which was rare. Since they didn't know what to do with me, they threw me into the art room. After a while, I began to pick things up and eventually I liked my surroundings. When I got out, I got a vocational rehabilitation scholarship to the Art Institute of Pittsburgh and once I graduated from there, I could go to a regular college. So the early part of my life was a

dead end, but it put me on to a trajectory to something I love. I consider myself one of the lucky ones," Tim says.

Throughout his life as a painter, Tim has exhibited an interest in what could be called "traditional" work, not because it's his preference, but because he knows the people who will commission him will want him to paint in that style. "I'm not any different from someone who works at Home Depot," Tim explains. "I have to go out and earn money. So much of my work is in the traditional style because I know I can sell it."

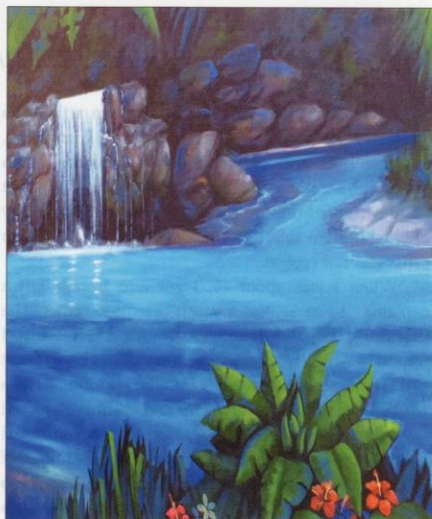
Many Virginians may recognize Tim's work from the sundry recreational centers he has decorated throughout the Commonwealth. Rich with tropical flowers, playful turtles and colorful fish, they can be found in Fairfax County at the Audrey Moore Recreation Center, Cub Run, Lee District, Providence, South



Run and Spring Hill Recreation Centers. The 12 or 13 swimming pools and one hot tub he has painted have taken years to complete. "I've worked with other people and I definitely want to mention their names," Tim says. "I've collaborated with Mitzi Beneck, Elaine Kallas, Amy Kellett, and Michele O'Day."

"It's hard work. The murals are huge—20' or 30' tall and about 100' long. You have to lie on a scaffold much of the time. It's just as hard as being a roofer, but it's gratifying. In one mural, I incorporated the African-American Museum and the American Indian Museum. In another, when you walk up the high dive and turn around, a bottle-nosed dolphin is staring at you. Murals really transform the space and add life to otherwise cold spaces. I'm really proud of them."

Tim's work as a set designer also allows him to toil in large spaces, approximately 26' high x 60' wide. In the past, Tim has created scenic designs for the Manassas Ballet, one of which allowed him to integrate his familiar whimsical style with actual landmarks from Washington, D.C.



Page 38: "Scott's Run #17," gouache on illustration board, 14" x 10"; inset: painting variation "Scott's Run," mixed media on foam board, 14" x 10"

Page 39: "Emerald Bay," gouache on illustration board, 8" x 14"

This page top, from left: "Bass Harbor, Acadia," gouache on illustration board, 16" x 12"; painting variation "Bass Harbor horizontal Cheerios box; and detail of outdoor mural at Spring Hill Aquatic Center

Opposite: "Lake Tahoe," gouache on illustration board, 10" x 14"



"This connection has allowed me to paint scenes for *Cinderella*, *Don Quixote*, *Giselle*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Swan Lake* and *The Nutcracker*," Tim says. "Some of the theaters around town call me in to do scenic painting, but not design."

Compared to the murals and theater design, the paintings Tim is working on now are relatively small: 10" x 15" or 20" x 30". "I begin by making an original, additive painting," explains Tim, "followed by a subtractive process, when I make color reproductions of the original."

"I cut those reproductions into thin strips, squares or even small circles. The color reproductions are made in a variety of shades, so when I reassemble the work there will be added dimension by contrasting cool shades with warm shades and dull shades with brighter shades. The next step is a sort of mixed media technique where I combine the cut-out pieces from the original design with other materials such as paint, colored papers and even unconventional materials such as glitter, mylar and recycled elements," Tim says.

Tim sees his artistic process as a response to nature, where a period of decay is followed by a period of growth. "Things that were incubating during winter eventually have a new life, which is a variation of the old life," Tim says. "New compositions are direct variations of the original painting. In a way, they are like prints because I make multiples of each original and number them the way a printmaker would number a series."

"But they are also different from conventional prints because each one is done in a different way and has a completely unique appearance," Tim says. "In that way, each variation could be considered an original in its own right."

Ultimately, it is through these paintings that Tim sees himself solving the artist's perpetual question about what to paint and how to paint it. "Though I'll never grow tired of doing traditional landscapes," he says, "I also think that in this day and age, you need to kick your style a step further with every painting."

Tim Grant | www.tgrantartworks.com

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