

# Interview with an Artist

## Paul Jackson, AWS, NWS



*Liquid Light*

I met Paul Jackson in 2011 when he was in Seattle to jury the NWS Annual International Open Exhibition. I took the week long workshop Paul offered while he was in town and it turned out to be a peak experience.

Paul is a world class watercolorist and teacher. His mastery of watercolors, combined with his affable charm and teaching style drove me to sign up for his 2012 Sketchbook Tour of Italy.

Did I get my fill? Not even close. I am now signed up for his Angkor Wat Watercolor Tour, during which we will explore and paint our way around Cambodia and Thailand in February 2014. And Paul is coming back to teach another 4-day workshop in Seattle in May 2013!

Peak experiences abound!

A prolific artist and ambitious world traveler, Paul is one of today's most versatile and visible contemporary

watercolorists. Paul's workshops are organized by his wife, Marla, who runs everything smoothly from behind the scenes while Paul focuses on the art of teaching and inspiring.

I am thrilled to bring this interview to the readers of *Hot Press*. I hope it inspires wanderlust and artistic inspiration.

*Charlene Collins Freeman*  
[www.charlenecollinsfreeman.com](http://www.charlenecollinsfreeman.com)

*Tell me a little bit about your background.*

I was born in Lawrence, Kansas and spent my adventurous childhood in Starkville Mississippi. I discovered my passion for watercolor at Mississippi State University in 1985 and I received a Master of Fine Arts degree in Missouri in 1992.

*Why did you start painting?*

I'm not really qualified to do much else.

I took a watercolor class as an elective in college and fell in love with it!

*How did you come to be the "Wandering Watercolorist"?*

I love to travel... it's in my blood. It's the only thing I like to do more than paint.

*What projects are you currently working on?*

Having returned home after a whirlwind travel year in 2012, I've spent much of 2013 in the studio painting and putting together a book of my watercolors from the past thirty years. With over 3,000 paintings to work with, it was a difficult task to narrow it down to the top 10%, but we produced an incredible portfolio that sums up my painting career beautifully, thus far. The book, *The Wandering Watercolorist*, is now finished and I'm getting ready to get back to my travels!

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*String Theory*

*Do you have a favorite work featured in this book?*

My favorite painting featured in the book would have to be my latest. I managed to squeeze one last painting in before the deadline, and it represents new beginnings and hints at things to come.

The painting is called *Captain Jim's Redwing Squadron* and it is an attempt to show the movement of wing beats of Red-winged Blackbirds.

The painting is also a salute to a great artist, Jim Froese, who passed away last year. Jim was a professor at the University of Missouri when I was in grad school. He was also an inspirational painter with whom I shared a fascination for this remarkable bird.

*What is your creative process like?*

My artistic process begins with observation. This is my favorite part of the painting...the rest is hard work! I am constantly seeking new inspiration from the world around me. I travel so that I am constantly stimulated with new ideas. I search for dramatic light to reveal subjects to me in interesting ways. I sketch, photograph, imagine, reinvent, edit and abstract my subject until it has personal meaning and is satisfying to me.

Only then do I commit my inspiration to watercolor paper, carefully rendering my vision in light-to-dark layered luminous washes of watercolor pigment.

*Do you spend time sketching or making value studies before starting a painting?*

Yes... Sometimes both... Sometimes neither. It really depends on what challenges the painting is going to present. Every painting is unique and hopefully offers something new. I generally work out the difficult problems on paper in advance.

*Tell us more about your working style and subject-matter choices, and how these are developed from what you have done in the past.*

I'm always looking for a way to challenge myself. Whether my subject is landscape, cityscape, portrait, architecture, still life or abstract, I paint to captivate the viewer with genuine emotion, intensity and finesse.

*When do you paint and how do you structure your time?*

I paint as often as I can.

I try to clear all the decks first so I'm not interrupted. When I paint at my best, I retreat to my painting cave and push everything else off until I'm done.

*What art supplies do you use?*

Arches 260 lb. cold press is my favorite surface. I use Daniel Smith transparent watercolors, double ended sable brushes, and very little else.

*How long does it take to complete a work of art?*

There is no set time... sometimes three days... sometimes six months.

*Do you sometimes struggle to know when a painting is finished?*

Rarely anymore. I tell a painting when it's finished at this point in my career.

*What makes a painting successful?*

A combination of many factors: an original idea, a story to tell, brilliant execution, how it makes me feel when I'm done.



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*How do you define success (as in a painting, or as an artist)?*

Success as an artist is kind of tricky. It's not any certain award or dollar figure. I define success by the desire to keep painting when I wake up each day.

*Which artists or art movements inspire or influence you?*

Walter Anderson  
Caravaggio  
Leonardo da Vinci  
Alphonse Mucha  
Winslow Homer  
Art Nouveau

*Other than other artists or art movements, where do you draw your inspiration/creativity from?*

My Muse, my travels, and my daily experiences all inspire me.

*I know that when you refer to your "muse," you are referring to Marla. Is she also an artist? What part does she play in your whole process?*

Marla is a photographer and paints for personal enjoyment. She is my constant companion, muse, partner and manager. Marla coordinates my workshops and travel schedules. She is the finest artist support crew imaginable.

*Are you involved with any art societies? Why or why not?*

I am involved with the American Watercolor Society, National Watercolor Society and I'm on the board of the Missouri Watercolor Society.

I have taught workshops and judged exhibitions for many state and regional watercolor societies, including the Northwest Watercolor Society. In 2009 I served as the invited juror for the American Watercolor Society's 142nd Annual International Exhibition.



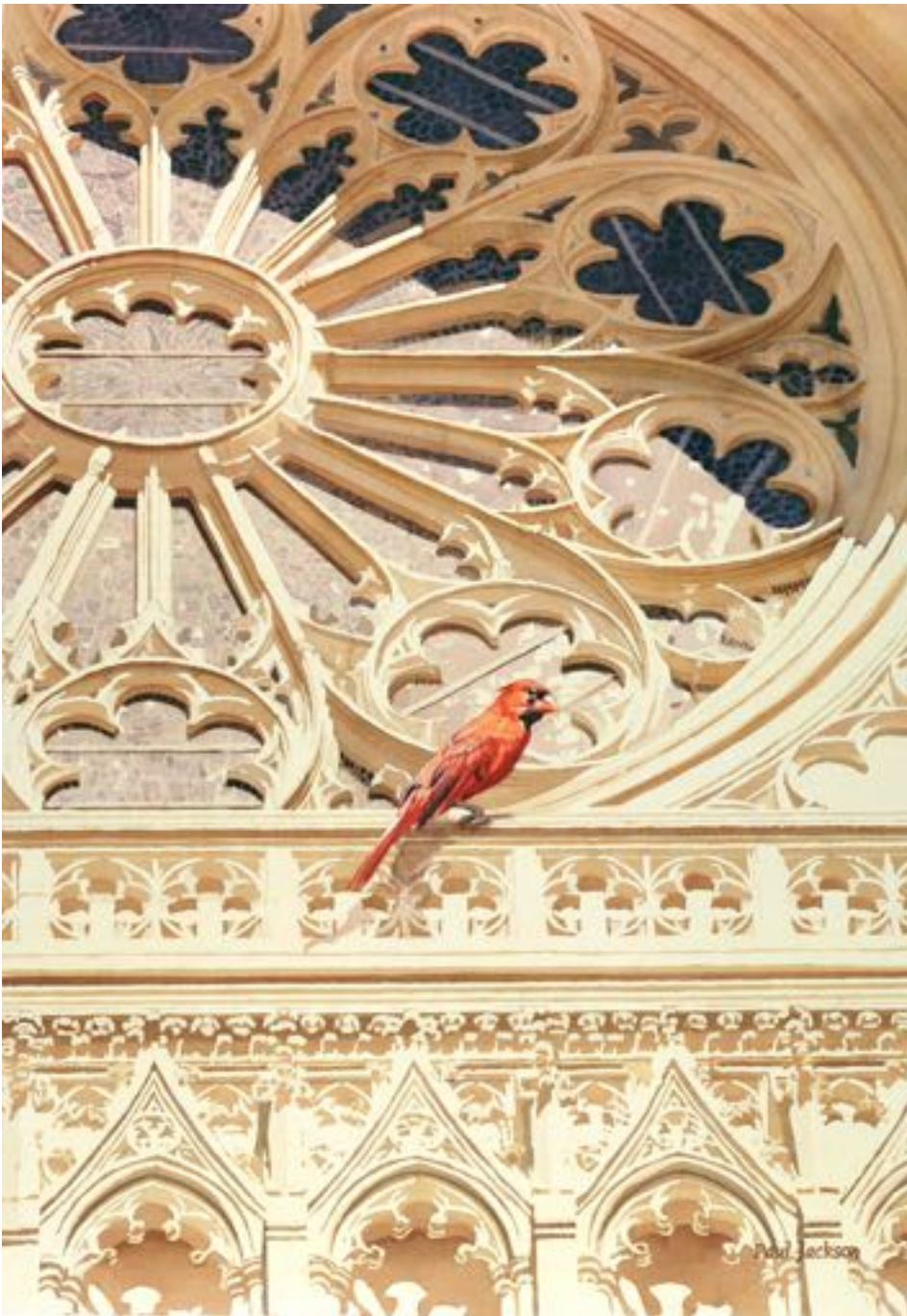
*Rita & Katrina*  
36 x 22

*Do you have any advice for aspiring painters?*

**Paint all the time. Accept rejection and success with equal skepticism. Be your own best and worst critic. Give all that you can of yourself to others.**

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*Cardinal*

*What are some of your artistic accomplishments that you are most proud of?*

I was honored by the American Watercolor Society with signature membership when I was 30. I am also a Signature member of the National Watercolor Society and an Honor Member of the Missouri Watercolor Society.

I was featured as one of the Master Painters of the World in International Artists Magazine and in 2008, I was the featured speaker at the International Watercolor Masters Invitational in Lushan, China. In 2011 I was the only American artist invited to the International Art Meet in Kolkata, India. More recently I won the silver medal at the International Watercolor Society in Turkey.

*Do you offer workshops?*

This is my 2014 workshop schedule. Let's paint!

February 1-11, 2014  
Cambodia & Thailand  
Angkor Wat Watercolor Tour

March 12-14, 2014  
Baton Rouge, LA  
Nature's Patterns and Textures in Watercolor

April 3-5, 2014  
Columbia, Missouri  
Nature's Patterns and Textures in Watercolor

April 7-10, 2014  
Ankeny, Iowa  
Portraits in Watercolor

April 21-24, 2014  
Baltimore, MD  
Portraits in Watercolor

May 1-3, 2014  
Washington, Virginia  
Painting Transparency of Glass in Watercolor

May 12-16, 2014  
San Diego, California

May 21-24, 2014  
Seattle, WA  
Nature's Patterns and Textures in Watercolor

June 10-12, 2014  
Toronto, Ontario  
Glass and Still Life in Watercolor

June 23-26, 2014  
Lac du Flambeau, WI  
Nature's Patterns and Textures in Watercolor

September 1-5, 2014  
Sydney, Australia

September 8-12, 2014  
Melbourne, Australia

October 6-9, 2014  
Landgrove VT

October 20-24, 2014  
Raleigh, NC  
Nature's Patterns and Textures in Watercolor

October 27-29, 2014  
Destin, FL

November 5-8, 2014  
Fort Lauderdale, FL  
Portraits in watercolor



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*Paul Jackson spent his adventurous childhood in Starkville Mississippi. He discovered his passion for watercolor at Mississippi State University in 1985. He received a Master of Fine Arts degree in Missouri in 1992, and has since been relentless in pursuit of his creative dreams, receiving top honors in national and international competitions, contributing his art to a vast library of magazines and books and sharing his creative influence to all corners of the earth.*

*Paul was the Grand Prize winner in the Paint Your Way to Paris competition and has been featured as one of the Master Painters of the World in International Artists Magazine.*

*Jackson's artwork has been on the cover of The Artist's Magazine four times. Other media featuring Jackson's work include American Artist, Watercolor magazine, Watercolor*

*Magic, Watercolor Artist, Forbes Magazine, The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, the Washington Post, NPR, CBS News, The Baltimore Sun, The St Louis Post, The Kansas City Star, and TWA's Ambassador Magazine. Jackson is the author of Painting Spectacular Light Effects in Watercolor, from North Light Books and more recently, The Wandering Watercolorist. Both are available on his website at [www.pauljackson.com](http://www.pauljackson.com).*

*Paul is an eagle scout, an adventurous spirit and travels the earth in search of visual inspiration.*

*Interview with Paul Jackson  
by Charlene Collins Freeman  
Feature Editor, Hot Press*

**[www.pauljackson.com](http://www.pauljackson.com)**



*Uptown Bird*



*City Vibe*