

# Artists Making Their Mark

There is a lot of superb art being made these days; this column shines light on a trio of gifted individuals.



**CAMERON SMITH** (b. 1970) was a kindergartener when a teacher noticed his artistic talent. Fortunately, his family encouraged it, and when they moved to Wilmington, North Carolina, a new chapter began for their 13-year-old son. Wilmington is close to the Atlantic Ocean, so he became a skilled surfer, as well as an avid canoer and hiker.

After graduating from North Carolina State University in Raleigh, Smith found himself welding steel sculptures for the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus, which ultimately led him to its famous Clown College and a year on the road making audiences laugh. Even in his tiny room aboard the circus train, however, Smith continued painting in oils and acrylics. He has subsequently explored various avenues of creativity, including portraiture and furniture-making, as well as graphic, interior, and landscape design. All of this, he explains, has been “a sort of cross-training, as I believe the artist never stops learning.”

One of Smith’s greatest passions is working outdoors, particularly by the sea. Not surprisingly, he regularly depicts people enjoying themselves along the coast: surfers, sun seekers arrayed on colorful towels, children playing on the sand. He also records the piers and marinas that adorn our coasts and shores, as well as woodlands and even city streets that strike him as noteworthy. In all cases, Smith’s lively brushwork and deft contrasts of light and shadow make us feel like we are there beside him, squinting in the sunlight and dazzled by the plethora of patterns and shapes that any given scene contains. Even when he must consult his photographs (for the larger and more populated sun-worshipper scenes), Smith never loses that sense of being there, or of fascination with the human condition. “The more I search for beauty,” he notes, “the more I find it all around. I seek an honest beauty, not polished, and I find a sense of peace in it, too.”

The latter certainly pertains to Smith’s intimate scenes of his wife, Kristen, and five young children, usually depicted indoors or up close. The family is devoutly Catholic, and it is significant that Smith sees his entire artistic process as an interplay with the Holy Spirit. His sense of awe — at the beauty of his daughters or the sparkling of ocean waves — carries over to his success as a painter of religious images, mostly commissions from churches, nonprofits, and broadcasters, including the



Cameron Smith (b. 1970)

*Summer Color*

2015, Acrylic on linen, 36 x 36 in.

Walls Fine Art Gallery, White Sulphur Springs, WV

Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. These faith-based works, which depict not only icon-like images of Christ and the Virgin Mary but also papal portraits, underscore Smith’s deeply felt belief that God is present everywhere, even on a crowded beach. ■

*Smith is represented by Walls Fine Art Gallery (White Sulphur Springs, WV).*