

# Wildscape

Wildlife Art & Conservation

Vol.8 No.4

Let There Be Light

Anne Shingleton

Painting Leopards

Sue Dickinson

Wildscape's First

Premier Workshop

*Inspired by Nature...*

*Created for Artists*

UK: £3.50

Andrew Kiss • Wildlife Photographer of the Year • Ron Orlando • AFG Exhibition





## From the Editor's Desk

Having only just recovered from Wildscape's first premier Workshop, I find myself in awe of the skill and incredible techniques employed by different artists to achieve their stunning paintings and sculptures. There is no doubt that even if you think you are well up on your art and producing good work, a few hours in the presence of anyone of our top professional artists soon brings your efforts into perspective.

In this issue we have had the good fortune to persuade Anne Shingleton, who enjoys the beautiful light

experienced in Italy, to let us into her secrets of creating the fantastic light effects in her paintings. Light is no doubt one of the most important aspects to be considered in any painting, even if it is just being aware of the light source itself, the direction from which it comes and how it falls on, and helps mould the shapes of the various elements within your painting. So often, when someone has created a painting using a number of different reference photographs, they can forget to notice that the light may be coming from a different directions in each of the photographs and must be changed to suit the overall lighting for the finished painting.

Light can also help create the mood of a painting, whether it be dark and sombre or bright and high key. Artists such as Vermeer and Rembrandt made good use of light for dramatic effect. Rembrandt's heavy, brooding backgrounds are often offset by a spotlight effect on his subjects, serving to highlight detail and to bring the viewers eye straight to the main subject of the piece. Whilst Vermeer made great use of light and its effect on his subjects as it entered his scenes via a window or doorway. Light can make or break a painting and we should pay great attention to its inclusion and application in our work.

Another artist we feature in this issue, Andrew Kiss, from Canada, also makes great use of light in his work. However, that was not the main reason for inviting Andrew to contribute to this issue. Andrew creates wonderful, vivid and exciting wilderness landscapes, which will hopefully inspire readers to look more carefully at the background settings for their animal subjects. The environment in which animals live says so much about their lifestyle, so interpreting the correct surroundings, the trees, shrubs and plants, the rocks and other aspects is really important when trying to create convincing, meaningful and accurate paintings of wildlife.

We have just had our first Premier Workshop, tutored by one of our top wildlife artists Jonathan Pointer. I think I can say on behalf of all those who took advantage of this very special opportunity to see Jonathan at work, and to gain from his expert guidance, that we all learned so much about our personal approach to our art and what and where we need to take on board the advice and instruction we were given. I hope that many more of you will join us for future workshops and hopefully take that next step in raising your artwork to a higher level of competence.

We would like to take this opportunity to wish all our readers a Happy Christmas and to quote Anne Shingleton... a Painterly New Year!

Ken Stroud - Editor

*Ken Stroud*



## Cover Picture

**'Forgotten Basket' - Detail**  
by Anne Shingleton

This painting of doves who have taken over this old basket hanging in an outhouse, typifies Anne Shingleton's love of birds and her expert skill in defining the light which falls on her subjects.

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# Let There Be Light

## Thoughts on Painting Sunlight



Above:  
'Butterfly Boat'  
Oil on Canvas  
50 x 60cm

Right:  
'Old White  
Pony'  
Oil on Canvas  
50 x 60cm

Below:  
'Morning  
Window'  
Oil on Canvas  
90 x 110cm

I have lived in Italy since 1980 so have had plenty of opportunity to study and think about sunlight. The temperature, on average higher than in my native England, allows more frequent out of door study and work. One year I painted landscapes outside every day that had sun, even through the winter. A wide brimmed hat shades my face and a white umbrella keeps the sun off my canvas, and more importantly, my palette. Another advantage of where I live in Tuscany is that there is little wind; anyone who's ever had the wet canvas land 'butter-side' down will understand the frustrations involved with plein-air painting on a blustery day.

Claude Monet (1840-1926) and his Spanish contemporary Joaquín Sorolla (1863-1923), both plein-air painters, have been my main sources for how to tackle painting sunlit subjects. Monet was a superb colourist and really understood light. To deal with the problem of the sunlight moving over his subject he stayed in the same spot and just picked up a new canvas and started a different painting; these became known as his Series Paintings. This way, he was able to capture

the light and atmosphere of a particular moment. He could study those subtle changes in colour and tone without worrying too much about the drawing and composition that had already been resolved on the previous canvas. This is a very good exercise and one soon learns that sunlit subjects are really only paintable for about half an hour.

So with a bit of memorising one can extend it to an hour in a single sitting. Because the sunlight moves around much more quickly than one thinks, it is better to come back the next day, as Monet did, and continue in that same half hour again, hoping that the weather hasn't changed. One soon learns to work quickly.

Joaquín Sorolla loved painting beach scenes. He even managed to work on big canvases on site. In the few photographs of him working it's possible to see that even he had a problem with the wind, since he built a windbreak around him on three sides and his canvases were tied down from all corners. Sorolla was able to work very fast since he was familiar with his subject. He developed a habit of making small oil studies from life, on little panels, often of cardboard, measuring about 20 x 25 cm. These studies, sometimes just a few brushstrokes, served as notes of tone, colour and composition for bigger canvases, and these also helped him commit his subject to memory.



My similar habit of making bozzetti, small oil studies on nut veneered, wooden panels, from life are essential for my bigger paintings developed in the studio. These have become my main references and have a freshness about them that I try to keep in the bigger works. In fact the spontaneity achieved in them makes them very saleable paintings although sometimes I'm quite reluctant to let them go, as they are my notes and references. I know one colleague who refuses to sell any of his!

### Working with Sunlight

The main thing to remember when painting sunlit subjects outside is that there is always more than one source of light, unlike ideal studio conditions where only north light prevails. If the sun is very strong there will be warm reflected light bouncing back onto the subject from the ground, from other surfaces and therefore from many different directions. If the sunlight is weaker, as when the sun is low in the sky, the cool light from the







By comparison with this established value, the rest of the painting's values and colours can be interpreted. A very useful trick this! It is these balances within the picture that I find so challenging and rewarding.

*Left:*  
'The Forgotten Basket'  
Oil on panel  
29 x 34cm

*Below:*  
'Ship of Cream'  
Oil on Canvas  
60 x 75cm

*Far Left Top:*  
Sphere Studies  
Oil on panel  
16.5 x 36 cm  
From the left, morning, midday and even sunlight as it illuminates a marble sphere set on a white surface.

*Far Left Bottom:*  
Pastel Sun/Shade Studies  
Pastel on tinted paper 47 x 22 cm

*The areas in shadow, in both cases, are just about the same tone and colour, even though they appear to be different.*

One must also remember that water in the atmosphere affects the light passing through it. The more moisture in the air, the more diffuse the light becomes making the scene hazier.

Lastly, don't forget sunlight passes through objects, often in the most painterly ways. One only has to

visualise sun passing through leaves, grapes, rabbit's ears or butterfly wings to comprehend this.

Translucency gives an impression of vitality, shows the quality of the substance illuminated and awakens emotions in the viewer.

## Inspiration

My inspiration starts with an emotional reaction to a particular image. I believe the desire to repeat that emotion is the first step in the creative process. It generally arises from a particular lighting on a subject that holds some deep meaning for me. I love the way light reflects off surfaces, like off the straw onto the belly of a ruminating cow; or the pink glow of light through a kitten's ears or the blue sky light being reflected off a swan's back.

sky above may have much the same intensity as the sun's light. Thus the subject would be lit by a direct, yellow light from the side and a diffuse, blue light from above, resulting in cool cast shadows; cool, that is, in comparison to the warmer sunlit areas. Everything that is bathed in sunlight is usually slightly yellow, and all that which is in the shade is usually cooler, or bluer in colour. (See Fig. 1)

My studies of a white sphere show the different effects of mid-morning, midday and late evening sunlight, an exercise well worth doing. The pastel demonstration in Fig. 2 shows how the eye can be tricked into thinking that the tone of the shadow cast on the paper by the



sunlit cylinder on the left is darker than the tone of the sheet of paper entirely in the shade. They are both in fact the same tone and colour. Holding up a black pencil in front of one's eye, and comparing it to the darkest shadow, can prove actually that the shadow is not black and can help the eye judge real tones and colours.





Right:  
'Rumination'  
Oil on canvas  
100 x 162 cm  
Many small  
studies on  
wooden panels  
and drawings  
were made in the  
cowshed before  
the large canvas  
could be worked  
upon in the  
studio.



Below:  
'Stable Blues'  
Oil on canvas  
130 x 130 cm  
The white horse  
was lit by the soft,  
cool light of the  
mediterranean  
sky, filtering  
through the trees  
behind me as I  
worked. A little  
reflected sunlight  
from the  
vegetation  
outside entered  
into the  
stable via the  
shiny metal roof  
and lightly  
caressed the  
horse's  
dusty coat.

Bottom Right:  
Bozzetti for  
painting,  
'Swannery'  
Oil on panel  
24 x 26cm

This passion or desire, sparked off by often the most fleeting of images can sometimes take years to mature into a clear vision. The passion inside me has to be pure and strong enough to sustain this particular vision for the duration of the creative process, which can also take years. How this all works is a great mystery to me. All I know is that these are natural forces working and I have to work with them at their own pace and respect them.

My aim is to get my pictures to sing, to make them look as if they were made effortlessly, and to convey a sense of the spirit of a living creature at one with its own world. But these strong emotions behind my work do not eliminate the need for a great deal of thinking and planning before starting a painting. Often I will spend ages arranging the lighting and my position in relation to the subject and the light, especially if I'm working indoors. I can't remember who said it, but it's true, a comfortable chair in one's studio is a very important piece of equipment!

There are many other things to consider too, especially when dealing with animals. One day I turned up at a local farm, in the country outside Florence city, to work on a magnificent male turkey I'd seen the week before, only to find that it was in the pot that day! Even with domestic animals, it's important to be well informed apparently.

that I get to know a subject very well, and let the possibilities of new ideas reveal themselves as the work progresses. There is so much that one commits to memory, the anatomy and proportions, characteristic poses and movements, colours and textures. For initial drawings I use charcoal, pencils and pastels on tinted paper. I like to prepare my own canvases with rabbit-skin glue and gesso. This gives me the exact amount of absorbency that I like for working with oil paints. Acrylics have never appealed to me, probably because the tone changes as it dries, and watercolour doesn't suit me, because I like to work from dark to light and make the lights opaque, although I think watercolour is a beautiful medium.

Sometimes I extend my knowledge into three dimensions, making bronze sculptures, where form and movement can be expressed freely without the constraints of colour and composition within a frame. I find it is good to have a break from one creative medium and to work in another. It stimulates new ways of seeing, and all helps to keep the work fresh and vital. "Tutto fa brodo" as Tuscans say - everything enriches the broth!

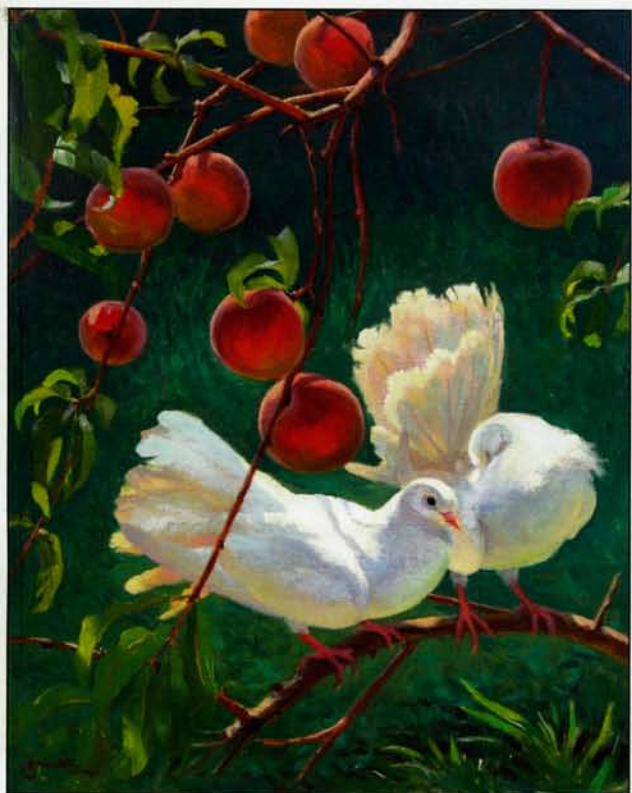


## Method

I tend to work on a body of work that spans at least a year so







## White Animals

People ask me why I like to paint white animals. It is surprising how many animals are white, so many wild and domestic bird species, cats, cows, horses, lambs. I don't have difficulty finding subjects. White animals give me the opportunity to develop my interest in colour and tonal balance and give me more scope to be painterly. This is because anything white reflects the colour of the light falling on it. The subject will show changing warm and cool colours through its changing planes. So many painters have placed something white in their landscapes or interiors exactly for this reason. Women in flowing white dresses have mostly filled the bill here. I prefer white animals. A black cat in a coalhole would give me few opportunities to be painterly!

I find the process of painting difficult enough and like to have as many conditions under my control as possible. Also the added advantage of being able to choose what time of day and the direction and quality of illumination means that I prefer to choose the tame animals in the back yard, or semi-domesticated wildfowl or animals accessible in a reserve. For the painting of a fantail dove I was able to put it in a temporary birdcage that could be placed where I wished. In one painting the cage was hung in a tree that had the most delicious ripe peaches.

My love of animals in all shapes and sizes surely stems from my farming family background. To husband animals well one needs to watch them. My father instilled in me the skill of patient observation.



My passion for studying animals did not diminish as I took a degree in Zoology. I chose to go to University, strangely enough on the advice of another artist. As a schoolgirl I had written to Keith Shackleton, R.S.M.A., S.W.L.A., then the resident artist of Johnny Morris's Animal Magic programme on Children's BBC TV. This was in the early seventies when 'modern art' and 'abstract art' was all the rage. I was interested in neither and I confided to him my doubts about the worth of spending 3 years at an art school where you were left to 'experiment' and 'express one-self'. He said, rightly, that if I were really interested in art I would do it anyway, so why not study a subject in detail at university level and get a good qualification. Which is exactly what I did.

Florence to a small private school run by an Italian lady, in her early nineties who was the only one teaching the classical method at that time. I was really fortunate to spend two years with her. Despite

*Above::  
Anne at work in  
her studio. Note  
the Bozzetti on  
the side easel on  
which the main  
painting is to be  
based.*

*Above Left:  
'Two Doves in a  
Peach Tree'  
Oil on canvas  
50 x 40cm*

## Teachers

I have to mention the greatest influence on my work, Signorina Simi (1890~1987). In 1980, after 2 years at Bournemouth and Poole College of Art studying illustration I found myself on a train heading out to

*Centre & Below:  
Bozzetti Oil on  
panel 20 x 25cm  
for the swan  
painting 'Moult'  
Oil on canvas  
45 x 75cm shown  
below.*





Right:  
*'The Pursuit of Happiness, or Nothing Ever Works Out the Way You Think it Will'*,  
 Oil on canvas  
 60 x 75 cm  
 The strong yellow light from the lamp is the main light source, but off to the right of the painting a small high window let in softer cold light from the sky, as shown on kitten's white fur.



Centre Right:  
*'Fighting Cocks'*  
 Oil on canvas  
 90 x 110 cm  
 There is a touch of the surreal here since sunflowers do not grow facing in different directions. Pieces of string forced the sunflower heads to pose in the right directions, whilst I worked in the field.  
 A compliant white leghorn cockerel, who didn't mind being held in various positions, posed, so long as he got his fill of sweet corn.

her age, she didn't miss a thing and was an excellent teacher. Basically, la Signorina taught us construction (how to draw accurately), chiaroscuro (tone/values or the black and whiteness) and later, colour and the basics of oil painting. We had life classes, working from the model, drawing with sharpened sticks of charcoal on off-white paper. The pose lasted for three hours every morning for two weeks. Portrait was studied for four afternoons a week. This pushed my skills in perception and painting to a higher level. Human and animal anatomy I studied by myself with the help of books, visits to the city collection of skeletons and to the Uffizzi Gallery to study Leonardo drawings - facsimiles of course! In Florence, the city of the Renaissance, I was able to pick up tips from artists and artisans on the materials and methods of the masters and experiment for myself. Later, I learnt sculpture methods and the process of lost wax casting in bronze from the sculptors and foundry workers in Pietrasanta, just north of Pisa.

Sometimes I think I must be mad to attempt to paint moving objects in changing lighting conditions. However, I remain tantalised and challenged by nature in all its beauty and enjoy learning more



each day about the process of creating, so I reckon I better continue. At present my subject matter is the mute swan, and Abbotsbury Swannery in Dorset has kindly allowed me free rein to find inspiration and to make my studies amongst their 600 or so magnificent birds. This will culminate with an exhibition and a book launch held by the Wildlife Art Gallery, Lavenham.

## About the Artist

Anne's first one-woman exhibition was in King's Street, London in 1983. She has participated in many group exhibitions in Italy, the Netherlands, the UK, and the USA including the Royal Society of Portrait painters, the Society of Wildlife Artists and the Pastel Society

and also has had 14 one-woman exhibitions in these countries, 6 of which with The Jane Neville Gallery, Nottinghamshire. In 1992 she began to sculpt and became a member of the Royal British Society of Sculptors in 1997. □

Occasionally, Anne gives art classes - details are to be found on her website: [www.anneshingleton.com](http://www.anneshingleton.com)

Right:  
*'Swan and Air'*  
 Oil on linen  
 55 x 138cm

