

MUSINGS ON JOURNEY AND INFLUENCES FOR TONALISM AND LUMINOUSITY



The Bevan/Rossiter house in Maryland



A painting by Erick Kensett Rossiter, 1882

Looking back, I am more certain that my art influences began during a childhood spent in my grandmothers house. The gabled house was built for the family by Architect, Erick Kensett Rossiter, a great Uncle on my grandmothers side. His daughter Edith, was the recipient of the house for her wedding.

In the 1970's, the house came to my grandmother filled with a collection of furnishings, art, rugs and books collected in Europe by the Rossiters. Years later, I inherited a painting by Erick, the son of artist Thomas Pritchard Rossiter.

Thomas Rossiter was a member of The Hudson River School of Painters and shared a New York studio with his fellow artist, John Frederick Kensett. His son Erick was named in honor of their lifelong friendship. Some of Thomas Rossiter's paintings were in the house and others are in American collections at The Smithsonian, The Met , The Boston MFA and The Frick.

The Smithsonian Arhive has a digital history of Thomas Pritchard Rossiter's painting career with amazing details of his art travels in Europe with Durand, Kensett, Thomas Cole and several others including an exhibition at Palais de beaux arts Paris where he received a Gold Medal.

I was totally unaware of any of this family history until late in my painting career. I now wonder if I was influenced to capture light and tone in my work from the beginning. The Rossiter paintings were perhaps the earliest visual references I had to landscape painting.. I may have recognized a quality of emotion or a spiritual message in these works while very young.

My school notified my parents that I was drawing in linear perspective at age 6. I wasn't encouraged to pursue fine art education, though I remember architecture as a suggested path.

In the Clinton years I was trying other careers in advertising/marketing and then finance. Later, I entered a full-time program at The Schuler School of Fine Art. The school was a European atelier model launched by an exodus of faculty from the Maryland Art Institute College of Art. It was heavy on anatomy, sculpture, life drawing and painting. The program was 5 days per week over 6 semesters. I was already raising my children. I found extra hours with a plein air box outside and began painting on my own late into the night in a studio.

THE SCHULER, PLEIN AIR AND WESTERN PAINTING

The Schuler education was a daily grind of intense fundamentals and I knew that this foundation would be something I could build upon in my own in studio practice. The burnt umber classicism wasn't quite what I wanted in style but I was committed to pushing boundaries beyond Schuler to make my own discoveries.. I was going outside to paint while I was enrolled there.. The plein air painting resurgence was building in the Southwest and California.

I spent a some years painting and studying only to throw away many hundreds of paintings.. I collected and broke every kind of easel and put heavy miles on cars. Oil paint stained everything I owned. My learning curve involved correcting subtle value ranges, pushing atmospheric perspective and adding more middle ground to create distance in my compositions.



The Schuler School of Fine Art



Plein Air painting in California

Yet, gaps still showed in my work. I wasn't happy with value keys and wanted more harmony for color and temperatures. I was able to accelerate into some better understanding by painting with western artists like Scott Christensen. I learned to mix color using a limited palette. . This was a worthy and terribly uncomfortable process that felt a lot like learning a foreign language in-country. I found comraderie with many other great painters around plein air events happening in museum shows across the US.

I joined art organizations like The California Art Club, Laguna Plein Air Painters, Oil Painters Of America and started receiving exhibition invitations and was juried into some top National shows. I learned a lot and met so many great artists. Interest from galleries followed and I was painting a lot of work. and was stretching my limits to keep up with demand.

A few years later, I started teaching workshops and received features n fine art periodicals and books. This was a productive time of rapid art making.. Hanging wet paintings in museums was the trend at that time but I always felt I was trading a bit of myself away from doing more contemplative works.

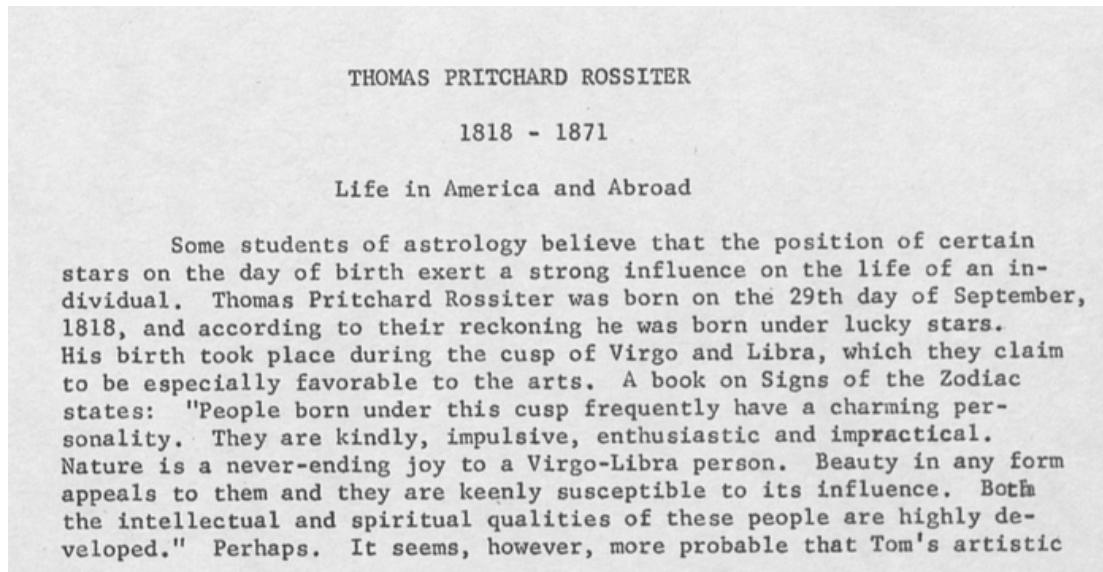
I discovered a few things out about scaling-up this way in the art world. For any artist there comes immense and unexpected influences painting in public, The plein air track helped me become known as a landscape painter and I was able to earn some income. I also loved making connections to other artists and the adventures of traveling and painting with them.. My galleries enjoyed the exposure and sales. With that comes pressure for repetition in work....to paint another one or to win prizes. Painting in groups was a source of both inspiration. and distraction. I was adding glazes of old Hudson River School tonalism and to get luminous aspects in my plein air work. . An enigma as. plein air paintings were generally opaque and a quick illustrators genre I tried to find enthusiasm for painting bright palettes of boat harbors and impressionist themes.. Though I always returned to themes transcending narratives to capture more sky. Feeling atmospheric light effects on the landscape for me was like walking into an ancient church.

Many years into my adult painting career, I accepted this persistent leaning for poetic or spiritual connection as a feature in my work.

I just couldn't explain why this was. Did it begin in childhood? Did my grandmother's church-like house with those Rossiter paintings imprint on me like a little bird? I will never know for sure but I found a stunning passage in an essay about Thomas Rossiter and it hit me like a brick.

I read the passage at The Smithsonian archives two decades into my career. I Thomas Rossiter and I share the exact same birthday. September 29th.

Edith Rossiter Bevan was an elderly woman when I met her as toddler. She was a well known historian by then. I am spellbound by her archived words on this birthdate as a particular cusp of the zodiac describing exactly as I have been throughout my life. So susceptible to beauty, joyous in nature, impractical, impulsive, enthusiastic and spiritual. Maybe, the "lucky stars" for an artist..





Teaching a professional workshop in Easton, Md.



California Art Club Gold Medal Exhibition at the Autry Museum 2014.
68x48 K. Gavin Brooks



Detail: Thomas Pritchard Rossiter



Thomas Pritchard Rossiter



Thomas Rossiter, Niagara Falls, Buffalo Museum of Art

K. GAVIN BROOKS



Grand Prize painting at The Academy Art Museum Easton



A Prize winning painting at The Laguna Art Museum

POETIC GLIMPSES

By Mary Nelson

When K. Gavin Brooks, who recently relocated to California, sits down to paint, she recognizes memory to and elements that don't serve the function she wants to capture and convey. That art, she tells me, is in the editing, and in her estimation, this is easy.

Brooks captures what she means, using a recent show as an example. That show, called *Mosaic Atmosphere*, reflected with the play of light, temperature and air in the canvas. The compositions, many and varied, have a dreamy sense of time and place, all while evoking tangible memories.

Essentially, Brooks says, taking

the aesthetic that has always been the center of her art and composed new paintings that she says, "are purely poetic glimpses at light and sky and water. But they don't have a narrative; they are pure halos." However, she says, would not be able to identify a location based on looking at these paintings.

At the same time, those paintings will trigger a memory or recall a location for anyone viewing them. Almost everyone has a subset of a memory sky they either tried to photograph or that they can recall nostalgically. But, Brooks says, photo's don't do justice to the memory; too many shadows obscure the vision. Brooks, however, integrates

ambition into her paintings of the sky that stimulates that recollection.

"I paint a lot of the sky and the light effects of sky," she says. "The tends to be a strong feature in my work. When people are reflecting or thinking about experiencing a doors, they are often looking at the sky, or what the sky is doing." Given the belief, has given her the art to eliciting such responses.

Art has always been a centerpiece in Brooks' world—as a child and the

Prayer Form, oil, 40" by 60"

"This painting is a composition of horizontal lines in dark country which sit on a bright base."

Clouds Morning, oil, 25" by 40"

"This oil painting had to be a bright color. I used a very light color, brownish, and made a composition and atmosphere for a short period of time. It's a sunrise, it's a sunrise with light."



At home in Maryland with 30x40 "Western Run Thaw" 2010

I am so grateful for my years of plein air professional participation and studying outside, I gathered a lot of insight about light temperature and the affects on mood. I started using palette combinations to express a certain time of day. I selected warm palette themes about the California golden hour before sunset and others about cool humidity of a summer day on the Chesapeake bay.

I made larger works in my studio from experiences and ideas gathered outside. I sold a lot of large format statement paintings all over the country. Many times I wished I had kept more of them. For me they are the true measure of all my time, struggle and quest for knowledge. They remain a culmination of so many paintings thrown away in order to grow as an artist. The large studio works were always about making a selection for statement.

These days I am teaching painting in some abstract genres, doing studio work for myself and accepting some selective private and corporate commissions. I don't stock a big pile of inventory these days