



Every Picture Tells a Story

By Nick Gordon

*Carroll Burgoon in his studio
photos by Chris Fritchie*

A PICTURE IS WORTH a thousand words. Every picture possesses a different meaning to the people who gaze upon it, but all pictures tell a story. However, a truly great picture will evoke the emotion of the event behind it. The story of the picture is brought to life and a person will relive the event from the captured image. This, of course, is no longer just a picture; it's a work of art.

Carroll Burgoon is one of the few artists capable of capturing a story and transforming it into art. A watercolor painter since 1994, Mr. Burgoon has made a living for himself by telling more than just a story with his paintings. His artwork spans half the globe and his customers include one billionaire, a PGA tour champion and several successful business men and women.

Mr. Burgoon's career path did not originally include art. A former freshwater scientist, he only did sketches of different plants and insects for his research. His art career did not begin until he showed a friend a drawing he had done of a

Purple Thistle. Mr. Burgoon's friend then introduced him to a famous painter and his soon-to-be mentor, Don Francisco Alcaraz, who urged Mr. Burgoon to travel with him to Spain to learn the techniques of watercolor painting.

"I arrived in Spain with only 20 tubes of paint," Mr. Burgoon explains. "When Alcaraz saw I lacked the colors to paint one of the trees in his yard, he made me stand next to it until I could tell him how many shades of green were in the leaves." After standing next to the tree for more than 20 minutes and guessing more than 100 different shades of green, Mr. Burgoon was able to move on to his next lesson.

Aside from a high school art appreciation class and his apprenticeship in Spain, Mr. Burgoon has never attended any art classes. "Art teaches color wheels and I don't know them. I mix by feel. Then, on the canvas it goes!" Even though he never received a formal education from an art school, Mr. Burgoon is gifted with a brush and with an innate ability to know what looks best in his paintings. A master of

recreating on canvas both the hands and the eyes of his subjects, his paintings focus on those areas. Mr. Burgoon believes that in order to engage a person in a painting, he or she must be able to feel what exists in his painting, and he thinks this is best done through the eyes. "The eyes are hard to do for a lot of painters, but it comes naturally to me," he says. "I feel kind of like I'm cheating."

Mr. Burgoon's favorite thing about painting is learning about the people behind each picture. "Each person's story motivates me, because everyone's story is so different. They are driven by a dream and go get it no matter what obstacle they have to overcome." He believes that listening to the story of each person is the best way to capture the emotion of the moment that he is painting. "When a person retells the story, I can see in their face how they feel about what they're describing." He then recaptures not only the scenery but the emotions through what he has learned about those he is painting for. That is how he is able to



create a portrait filled with emotion.

Before he begins the physical work Mr. Burgoon sits down with his client to learn about the people he is about to paint. Once he understands what the client wants and how passionate he or she is about the story behind the painting, he begins to sketch out his idea. During this process, he will take photos of the scenery to get an idea of the landscape and other specific details for each portrait. Once the sketch is complete, Mr. Burgoon shares it with the client to give him or her an idea of what the final product will look like. Then he starts to paint without interruption. Depending on the complexity of the subject, he can finish a watercolor painting in a matter of days or up to a month and half.

Life as a painter has not always come easy for Mr. Burgoon. "I did the whole starving artist thing," he says. But he found it more difficult to work in another field when his heart was in painting. During work, he would look at everything through the eyes of a painter and then try and decide the best way to turn his surroundings into personal artwork. In the end, he was pulled back into his craft and has no regrets. "It's been a real faith walk, and I couldn't have done it without my wife." It appears his faith has been rewarded; sports agent Joe Courrege has agreed to represent him.

Meanwhile, Mr. Burgoon continues to paint portraits, spend time with his wife Evelyn, and ride his bike with the Frisco Cycling Club. All of his paintings are made by request for anyone who has a story to tell and wishes to immortalize it on canvas.

Nick Gordon is a freelance writer who lives in Frisco.

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