

Manasquan River Group of Artists

Established 1938
Newsletter



M. R. G. A., P. O. Box 614, Manasquan,

www.mrga38.org

New Jersey 08736 April 2021

President's Message

Presidents Message April 2021

If you haven't seen our second MRGA Virtual Exhibition, "Local Inspirations" take a look on the MRGA webpage and wander through some excellent work by our members. Congratulations to the winners; well deserved. It also seems we received an excellent response to the MRGA Brielle Library sponsored show which was seeking 50 pieces to hang for 3 months at the library through June. We received 70 submissions from our members and managed to squeeze them all in working with some reduced space. The library has visitors returning regularly again and seeing live art will create some optimism that the light at the end of the tunnel seems to be getting brighter and larger. Stop in and reacquaint yourself with your fellow members' work.

The advent of the vaccine coupled with warm weather should energize plans for eventually getting our organization reassembled and restarted. There will be changes and restrictions for quite a while, but I am optimistic that summer will see some action on rescheduling some outdoor shows and perhaps regular meetings. Some of the local galleries have reopened and started in person classes with safety precautions in place. So welcome Spring; grab your plein air gear, head out into the sunshine, and make some art!

Enjoy the prospect of Spring, keep painting and keep positive.

Bob Stetz
President



Please visit the website for MRGA www.mrga38.org Our website is being updated regularly by Sheila Soyster. Please contact Sheila with any information: sheila624@comcast.net or 732-892-7692. Thank you Sheila.

Nobody tells you these things.....
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Art and the Pandemic

Believe it or not research shows that isolation and restriction, such as we have had over the past year, is predicted to have positive effects on the art world. During isolation the demand for creative and cultural content has intensified with digital access becoming more critical than ever. Although retail consumption (purchases of artwork, materials, etc.) and public interaction (exhibits, gallery openings, organizational meetings and conferences) within the art community has generally created a problem for artists, producers and consumers, the lockdown has created a demand for cultural and creative content that most likely will cause a boost in art sales, increased attendance at exhibits, and some returning of printed publications (art magazines, instructional books, etc.) that were suspended from distribution due to the pandemic. Artists who subscribe to hard cover monthly mags will find some publishers have realized their digital versions offered during the pandemic are more profitable to produce. Therefore, some will have to deal with the loss of that pleasing feeling of opening their mailbox and finding their favorite art mag among the lot. Digital access during the pandemic has become critical and has acted as a remarkable substitute, (maybe permanent in some cases) for communication among artists, exhibitors, and publishers alike. The art world will be one of the slowest to recover economically, but as the pandemic loosens, there is optimism that the public appetite for culture will increase markedly in all the arts and entertainment industries. A gallery or art exhibit visit by individuals (sans receptions for a while) will be the safest way to crawl back into the cultural scene without enduring large crowds of a Broadway show or concert. Soon we will be leaving that chair in front of our computer to step into a gallery or venue with work on the walls in living color.

My only analogy of the virtual art we have been experiencing over the past year is; You can look at many pictures of an elephant; but there is nothing like the experience of seeing one in person !

Members Showcase



"The Stare" by Laura Lutz
water color on mat board

Mrga At Brielle Library

APRIL THRU JUNE, 2021

NOTICE TO BRIELLE LIBRARY SHOW PARTICIPANTS:

To those who have included portfolio pieces at the Brielle Library Show

We have been advised by the Library Director that portfolio pictures can not be displayed as /covid restrictions. People will handle the pictures and the library cannot sanitize them each time they are touched. We have stored the portfolio pictures in the closet in the gallery room where we were told they will not be disturbed. You can pick them up when you pick up your show pieces.

By the way the pick up date has been changed to June 30 from 12pm to 4:30pm.

The MRGA Winter 2021 Virtual Art Show is “live”!

You can access it from the MRGA website (www.mrga38.org) or by pasting the following link into your internet browser - bit.ly/3kc3sX0

The show features 55 works done by 38 MRGA members.

Enjoy the Show!



Member News

Our condolences to member Linda Hejduk on the passing of her husband Peter Flihan on Monday March 15. Peter was familiar to all of us through his attending many of our meetings, exhibits, and MRGA events with Linda.

A memorial ceremony will be held later in the spring.

NEWSLETTER INFORMATION-PLEASE NOTE

All submissions for the newsletter and changes to your address, phone or email should be sent by email to MaryAnn Goodwin at maryanngoodwinarts@gmail.com by the 20th of the month for the next newsletter. Newsletters are prepared the prior month for September, October, November, December, January/February (Single issue in Feb.), March, April, May, and June. When announcing an award please give the title of your work. Photographs should include the names of the persons in them except for a large group. “Classifieds” will run only once unless you request a repeat.

The Last Supper: Louis Riccio's Biggest Challenge

I was caught completely by surprise during the winter of 1967 when the big bosses of the O'Mealia outdoor advertising company called me into their office to lay out a huge billboard project to celebrate Easter. Harry, the owner said: "Lou, we have another monumental project for you to paint indoors...it's the 'Last Supper' by Leonardo daVinci." Harry presented the specs for this 17ft by 34ft. mural for outdoor display. O'Mealia did not want the mural painted outdoors during the cold weather because the conditions were better to work in the shop. He said to me "you will sketch the entire drawing using the grid system." Because it was such an enormous job, the bosses felt the need to hire another artist, Herman Gudehus to assist me with the painting. Herman was considered a top pictorial artist in America and master in this business. At that time, I was 37 years old and Herman's age was 65 years. But I was delighted to have him as my mentor and we were now ready for the challenge. After finishing the entire drawing process with charcoal, Herman and I started the painting process. I was to start the heads on the beginning part on my scaffold and Herman would start the heads on the other end of the scaffold. It would take one day to paint a head and together we were able to paint two heads that day.

Shortly into the project that the big bosses abruptly decided to remove Herman and assign him to another project. Their reason was that they liked my painting style with the heads and wanted to keep consistency in the mural. I must say the heads that Herman painted were perfectly fine, but had a different look to them. Of course, this was to be kept a secret from Herman. As an example of the scope and size of the painting, the heads of the apostles and Jesus were to be painted at least 4 foot high and were very time consuming. Starting in January, this mural took me 2 ½ months to complete while working 8 hours a day. At last the 'Last Supper' was finished for display by Easter Sunday on March 27, 1967. It was a coincidence that the mural was to appear on the same billboard used for the 'Mona Lisa' that I painted several years earlier.

A few days after the 'Last Supper' was displayed, I took a ride out to see it alongside of Route 3 in Secaucus NJ, a popular highway entrance into New York City. As I approached it, there were a number of cars parked next to the billboard and standing were several onlookers in awe. I overheard them saying "it was just a paper poster". I struck up a conversation with some of the people and told them I was the artist and that the mural was a painting and not a photo print. I also told them that the story will be in all the major newspapers. Even so, they gave me this funny look of disbelief.

There are only a few of the notable outdoor billboard artists remaining today and I am happy to be here to share this memorable experience with the MRGA artists.

Louis N. Riccio

"The last Supper": Lou Riccio's Biggest Challenge

Riccio interview with Nardone



"The Last Supper" by Leonardo daVinci, painted 1495 to 1498 at the Monastery dining hall in the Santa Maria delle Grazie church, Milan, Italy...it is 15 ft by 29 ft and painted with Tempera Oil on two layers of dry plaster fresco on a stone wall.

VN: (Vinnie Nardone) What was your biggest challenge with painting this mural?

LR: (Louis Riccio): It had to be completed in 2 ½ months to be ready for Easter Sunday

VN: What was your most demanding challenge during this painting

LR: To make sure the drawing was accurately done in the "grid" system as it took two weeks to draw the apostles and Jesus.

VN: What was the most difficult part of the mural to paint ?

LR: The side walls with all the design work from the daVinci mural

VN: Were you interviewed by any reporter during or after the mural?

LR: Yes...the Jersey City Journal as well as other metropolitan newspapers

VN: Did the big bosses check on this project every day?

LR: the owner, Harry O'Mealia would come in every morning to greet the workers and oversee my mural progress

VN: Why was this mural project painted indoors instead of at the billboard site?

LR: This time it was painted indoors at the shop. The boss didn't want to take any chances of interruptions if painted outdoors during the winter....also, it would provide too much discomfort for me standing on the scaffold during these winter months

VN: Did the bosses provide you with a reproduction of the Last Supper? Where was this print displayed during the painting process?

LR: Yes, it was hand held as I copied from it

VN: How long was the mural displayed?

LR: One month beyond the Mar. 27 Easter day in 1967

VN: Describe the composition of the oil paints and the thinners that were used?

LR: The oil paints came in quarts and gallons and I formulated the proper consistency with linseed oil and mineral spirits which were kept in huge vats

VN: Did you mix the paints on a palette or use separate buckets for each color?

LR: The paints were mixed in oil cans that we picked up at the local gas station..we cleaned them out and made our colors

VN: What kind of support was used to paint on?

LR: A ¾" special plywood material covered in a thin light brown paper...we had to prime it with flat white paint..... this primer was perfect to keep the charcoal lines from wearing off

VN: How were the support sections erected at the billboard site?

LR: Each section was 18ft high and 4 ft wide and designed to fit and slide into a rail that was already constructed at the billboard site...the construction crew would take over the sections when the mural was completed.....each section was then varnished before it was loaded on the truck for installation at the site.....a boom was used to lift up several sections at one time into the framework

VN: How often did you come off the scaffold to check on the mural at ground level?

LR: Probably every hour and sometimes more frequently

VN: How did you get up and down the scaffold ?

LR: As you can see in the photo of me on the scaffold, I had my foot in the well of a pump jack used for raising and lowering the scaffold...initially I climbed up a small ladder to get to the scaffold

VN: Was the entire mural varnished after completion?

LR: Yes, I think it was a polyurethane varnish...all sections were varnished before they left the shop...the backs of the sections were painted with a special green paint to prevent warping

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VN: Was varnish applied to the mural to bring out the brightness of the colors?

LR: The varnish was always applied to special mural jobs such as the 'Mona Lisa' and this 'Last Supper' but it also helped to brighten the colors after the oil paints had dried

VN: Where was the mural stored after being displayed?

LR: Probably at some warehouse by the owner Harry O'Mealia

VN: Did you take any breaks during your daily 8 hour painting process?

LR: I got a 15 minute coffee break in the morning and one in the afternoon, including ¾ hr for lunch

VN: What chemicals were used during the clean-up?

LR: Mineral spirits were used because it was cheaper, safer and less toxic than turpentine

VN: How did you clean and store your brushes at the end of the day ?

LR: We used several kinds of flat bristle brushes since they held more paint than the synthetic type. We then had to rinse out the brushes with mineral spirits at the end of the day...we then folded them up in newspapers and left them in a steel compartments filled with mineral spirits to keep them from drying out



Lou Riccio painting the mural.

VN: Do you use the same kind of paint today in the outdoor mural projects?

LR: It would be the same kind of oil paint that made by the Ronan Co., especially formulated for billboard artists....it was not as thick consistency as tube oil paints and it came in gallon sizes...all the paints were mixed in another room

VN: Were the Apostle heads painted first instead of their bodies?

LR: Yes....they were about four ft high

VN: Was there a plan to paint certain Apostles during the process....when was Jesus painted?

LR: Yes, I started from the left toward the middle and then over to the right side to paint toward the center..... but I made my plan to paint the head of Jesus last so it would turn out the best

VN: What material was used to sketch the figures?

LR: Charcoal sticks

VN: Was this mural at 18ft x 50ft. the biggest ever done by you ?

LR: No, I painted a "Miller Beer" mural outdoors of a sunset with a large can of beer on the beach at 24 ft x 75 ft.

VN: Was it hard to match the colors on your mural to those of the actual fresco by daVinci?

LR: Not especially, as it came easy for me....I had a technique of placing an acetate sheet on the copy of the Last Supper to apply color samples to match the reproduction until satisfied

VN: The actual size of the Last Supper fresco was 15ft x 29ft and how did you decide on the 18ft x 50ft billboard size?

LR: The size was determined by my boss and had to fit the existing billboard steel structure to accommodate this mural

VN: How long did it take for the paint to dry?

LR: Overnight

VN: Did Herman Gudehus get to see your finished mural?

LR: Herman got to see my mural daily. As my mentor I consulted with him on anything I wasn't sure of....I learned a lot from his suggestions.

VN: Did the construction crew use the same type of steel platform at the billboard site that you used at the shop?

LR: No, the billboard site used a permanent steel platform with steel railings

VN: Did you keep your foot in the pump jack well all the time for security?

LR: No....I only used this pump jack to raise and lower the scaffold

VN: Did you paint most of your murals at the billboard site or in the shop?

LR: 90% of the time I painted my murals outside but this mural needed to be indoors because of the winter conditions and to meet the tight schedule for completion.

VN: What was your greatest feeling of accomplishment with this mural?

LR: It was very demanding for me to work on the 'Last Supper' at the start...it seemed overwhelming, especially having to deal with this Easter deadline....but as I went along I got my confidence back to move ahead.... My mentor Herman came to me when it was completed and said: "In my opinion, Louie, you have become a master billboard painter."

Vinnie Nardone is featured in a four page article along with his selected art works by art author and editor Tova Navarra in the quarterly issue of **Edge Magazine**. The article is titled "Sugarplums of the Waterways" can be reviewed on the internet as: www.edgemagonline.com.



A study of the Last Supper from Leonardo daVinci's notebooks showing 12 apostles (several have their names over the heads)



Detail of a Disciple. John to the right of Jesus but is a controversial speculation of being Mary Magdalene