

MyWorld

A VISIT WITH **MICHAEL OBERMEYER** AT HIS STUDIO IN LAGUNA BEACH, CA

Text by Bonnie Gangelhoff, Photos by Sean Michael Haffey



representation

Fairmont Gallery, Sonoma, CA;
James J. Rieser Fine Art, Carmel, CA;
Gallery McCollum, Laguna Beach, CA;
Debra Huse Gallery, Balboa Island, CA.

upcoming shows

Carmel Art Festival, Carmel, CA, May 17-20.
On Location in Malibu: California
Art Club, Frederick R. Weisman Museum
of Art, Malibu, CA, May 19-August 4.
Festival of Arts, Laguna Beach, CA,
July 1-August 31.

Describe your studio. My studio is in a complex of art studios about a mile and a half from the beach in Laguna Canyon. There's a trailhead for the Laguna Coast Wilderness Park directly across the road. My studio has two areas—the working side, which is usually a controlled mess of paintings, equipment, reference materials, and tools. And then the comfortable side with the couch, my books, personal photos, my collection of sports memorabilia, and things I've acquired throughout my career.

What are some of your favorite locations to paint in Laguna Beach? I love being on the beach, so just about any of the beaches and coves but especially the historic area of Crystal Cove with all the old cottages. Being down there is like stepping back in time to the 1930s or '40s. I also like to get up on some of the hillsides, where I can get some vistas of the town and views up and down the coastline.

Laguna Beach has a long history as an art colony. What connection do you feel to that history? As a child, my family would take me to the summer art festivals, where we could create our own art. Now I've been showing in the Festival of Arts for 15 years. Also, I'm a member of the Laguna Plein Air Painters Association, and we continue the tradition of the early California Impressionists, painting the gorgeous light and unique views of the area.

How does the physical environment of Laguna Beach influence your work? I love the beach; the warm weather; the quiet, open space surrounding the town; and the smell of the sea air. There is enough variety to keep



me inspired to continually paint outdoors as well as in the studio. I hope this joy shows in my work. And I am also influenced by the early plein-air paintings of the area and want to re-create some of those scenes in today's environment.

How do you describe your style? Somewhat impressionistic. I complete a painting outdoors, quickly, trying to capture the light but with a little more of my illustration background evident, especially in the drawing and "completeness" of the painting.

What do you keep in your studio? A lot of art books, family photos, way too many CDs to listen to while I paint, a small collection of sports memorabilia, and airplane models that my wife prefers I don't decorate the house with. I like to include some of my personal life in the studio to make it feel a little more like home.



What is in your sports memorabilia collection?

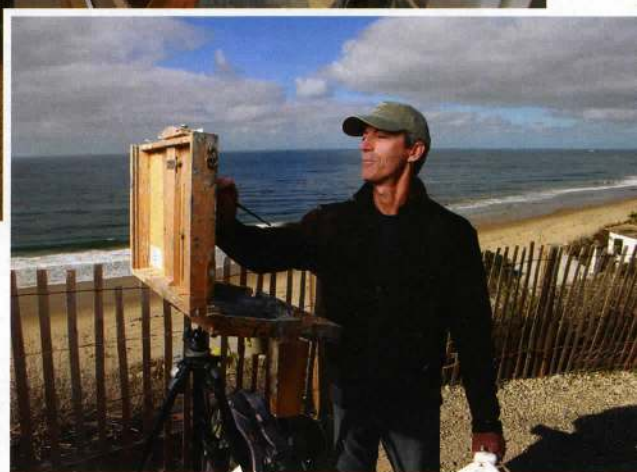
I love baseball, and I'm a big L.A. Dodgers fan. I'm also a fan of the Los Angeles Lakers. I have bobbleheads that are mostly of the Dodger greats, as well as one of Kobe Bryant of the Lakers, whom I met while painting near the beach several years ago. I also have a few paintings I did of some of my favorite players and had them signed, such as one of Magic Johnson. I also have some cherished baseballs signed by Sandy Koufax, Vin Scully, and Fernando Valenzuela; a few signed bats; and a golf cap signed by Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus, Lee Trevino, and Sergio Garcia after following them around on a golf course all day for a painting commission.

What music do you listen to in the studio?

My CD collection is wildly diverse, including

everything from classical to reggae to punk rock. Mostly I play classical or light jazz, like Diana Krall, or movie soundtracks. But, depending on my mood, I also might play everything from Sade to Stevie Wonder to Social Distortion. Just no rap or country. It's also amazing how well I sing with all this music when there is absolutely nobody in or near my studio.

Do you keep other artists' works? I've been fortunate to trade with some artists whose work I really admire, and I've actually bought some pieces despite my limited income. My collection includes Jeremy Lipking, Ken Auster, George Strickland, Ted Goerschner, Ray and Peggi Kroll-Roberts, Jesse Powell, John Burton, Ronaldo Macedo, Camille Przewodek, William



Scott Jennings, the late Neil Boyle, and a wonderful painting of me by Scott Burdick.

Describe yourself in one word. Passionate.

Where is the one place people will never find you? In a tattoo parlor.

When you are not painting, what do you enjoy doing? Anything outdoors—hiking, kayaking, ocean swimming, flying, mountain biking, and doing anything with my kids. ➤

attention art lovers: Do you know of an extraordinary art studio we should feature? Send your ideas to southwestart@fwmedia.com.