

Artist Eric Christensen

Taking watercolor to a new level

By Jim Brumm



He continued to sell his work through the gallery for two years, enjoying success and a growing reputation.

In October of 1995, he opened his own working gallery at Vintage 1870 in Yountville.

Christensen's work is unique in the world of watercolor. He doesn't use traditional techniques. According to the artist, it's because he's breaking all the rules.

"I didn't know what I was doing when I started," he said, "so I picked up the wrong

Dedicated. What other word would describe a man who is allergic to flowers yet worked as a florist for ten years in San Francisco – sneezing the whole time?

Eric Christensen is dedicated; to art, life and beauty. He has rechanneled that dedication into a new art form – watercolor, which allows him, through painting, to stay close to the flowers he loves.

Originally from Utah, Christensen began experimenting with watercolor in the late eighties and found that he not only liked it, but that he had talent. In 1992 he took one of his paintings to a gallery in Napa to have it framed.

When the gallery owner saw the quality of Christensen's work, she asked him for more and soon arranged a show of Christensen's watercolors – eleven pieces. Those paintings were sold within one month.

stuff. I bought watercolor medium to mix the paint and I bought museum board to paint on instead of watercolor paper."

Having no formal training, and using the "wrong" tools, he developed his own style. Skillful color mixing and layering, a gum Arabic medium and loads of natural-born talent impart brilliant, vivid luster to his paintings. They don't look like watercolors.

Favoring bright colors, his pieces



progress. He invites all to come and watch him paint, and encourages questions and conversation.

Sporting a goatee and a smile, Christensen greets each visitor, putting them at ease with his easygoing, friendly demeanor.

“I don’t mind people watching me paint,” he said. “In fact, I used to work at home, but I didn’t like it because there was no one to talk to, so I moved

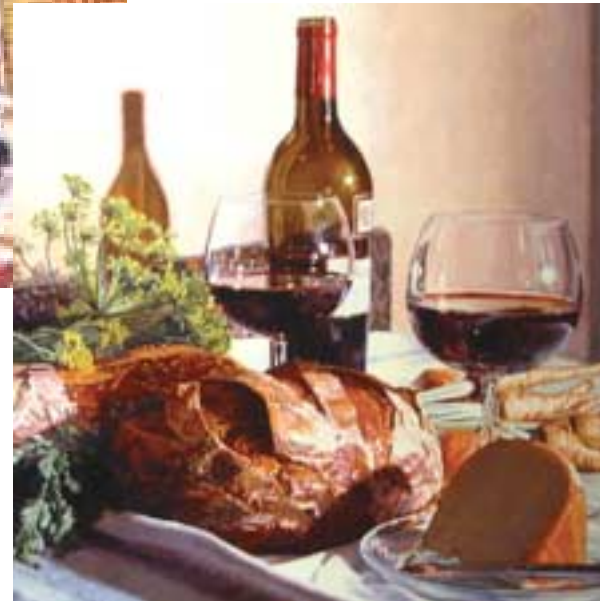
have a hyper-real, almost photographic quality.

His studio walls are covered with stunning paintings of flowers and fruit in bowls, vases and baskets, all with bright, glossy colors and beautifully detailed backgrounds.

smooth, ripe pears against a wool rug background.

“The background should support the foreground,” he said.

His unique style has won him accolades and recognition from the art community. Admirers



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“I like to contrast the colors of nature with the colors of man,” Christensen explained. Examples include daisies in a rounded vase with thin metal fencing in the background. Or a wooden latticework setting off bright purple morning glories. He also contrasts textures, one painting depicting

are buying his newly-finished pieces, available exclusively at his gallery, almost as fast as he can create them. In fact, much of his work is now commissioned.

Napa Valley art enthusiasts can visit Eric Christensen in his studio – a rare opportunity to observe an artist engaged on a work-in-

here where I could visit with people.”

Eric Christensen’s studio is located in the Vintage 1870 shopping complex, 6565 Washington Street, in Yountville. He can be reached at 707-945-0650.