

ALWAYS *the* LIGHT



ADRIENNE KRALICK

BY NEDDA DAVIS

Adrienne Kralick loves to paint the light that falls just before sunset, a slant of radiance to soak the shadows with mellow richness. Because she adores children, too, her work often burnishes this waning luminosity against a child's flesh or clothing—to warm the skin tones and fabrics or to caress the textures of a beach or woodland setting.

“Everything,” Adrienne says, “is more dramatic at this time of day.”

Adrienne's blue-green eyes deepen like the sea when she talks about painting at the shore, her favorite place years before she and her husband purchased a weekend home at Bethany, where children romping in the curling surf or kneeling at water's edge keep her brush intensely on the move. In her Great Falls studio, we see some of her work with children—intimate, innocent, absorbed in their surrounds as if oblivious to being observed.

In “Collecting Shells,” a small girl bends to the water in search of treasure as the iridescent light of day begins to wane. Along the Belgian coastline, a boy plays in a puddle, the slashes of red in his

cuffs and hood and the deep blue of his pants serving as counterpoint to his yellow slicker, tawny hair and golden skin. “Approaching Sunset” has a girl stooping in the sand to cuddle a shaggy dog as a soft breeze flutters across their shared moment. These paintings

have an impressionistic feel, an influence Adrienne loves for the glorious light the first painters of that period celebrated. The influence of Cassatt is unmistakable, too.

“The part of me that relates to Mary Cassatt,” says Adrienne, “is the emotion, because I'm a mother. I cherish children and love painting them. I really relate to that.”

Actually her style combines several traditions that reveal what she cares about, yet she still keeps true to herself. Beyond the play of color and light is the influence of the classically styled copies she's done of Old Masters.

“I like to be timeless, a bit like John Singer Sargent, who

“
I'm not one of those artists who like to shake things up.... If Mom sees her little girl as her little angel, that's what I want to project.
”

FACING PAGE: “KEN ON THE WEEKEND,” OIL ON CANVAS, 24" X 36"



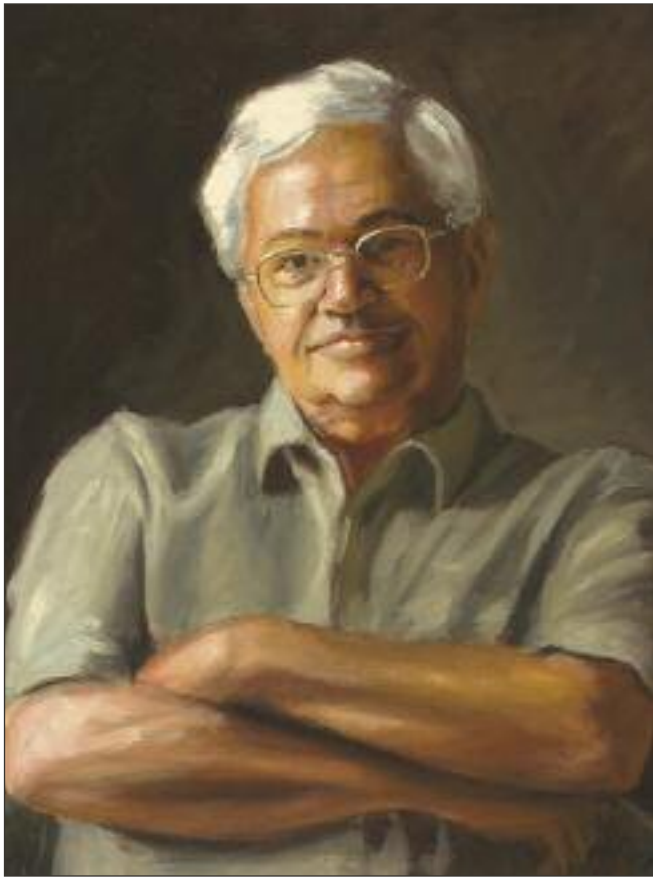
incorporated a combination of styles. Most portrait painters admire his work," she says.

She considers her seashores reminiscent of Joaquin Sorolla, an early 20th-century Spanish painter of beach scenes, whose vibrant sunlight and water were his trademarks. "That's why I'm not one particular style," says Adrienne. "Ken on the Weekend" has what she calls "a Rembrandt feel," though she admits with a laugh that Rembrandt probably wouldn't have dressed her husband casually, holding a beer.

"For as long as I can remember," says Adrienne, she has wanted to paint. "And it's always the light," she adds, although beauty in any form can inspire her. Out driving, she'll often pull to the roadside and grab her camera to capture an intriguing shaft of sunlight against the scenery.

Always, too, there are people: "If I paint a forest, I want people walking in the forest. If I paint a beach, I want children on the beach."

Adrienne's approach to her work is exultant, upbeat. "I'm very happy if I give somebody joy," she says. "My art has to be received."



Nothing brings her greater pleasure than capturing the essence of her clients' loved ones. Mothers speak of tears brimming when they see paintings of their children and praise Adrienne's knack for capturing qualities below the surface. This quality may be due to the importance Adrienne places on talking first to parents about their own impressions.

"I'm not one of those artists who like to shake things up," she says. "If Mom sees her little girl as her little angel, that's what I want to project." She even considers the color and décor of homes in which a portrait is to be displayed.

Adrienne's favorite models are her own children—a daughter who appears enchantingly old-fashioned in the early portraits (though now her mother notes that the 13-year-old sits less patiently now) and her 10-year-old son, garbed in an oversized T-shirt and depicted as the "cool dude" he sees in himself.

The classical influence disciplines and permeates Adrienne's method. She likes to begin with a monochromatic underpainting, working up in layers from dull to brighter, with the brightest colors saved for last. "In that sense, I'm not an impressionist," she says. "But it's a safe way of painting because I can get the likeness right first." She acquired the technique, which was used by 17th-century Dutch painters, at Chicago's Palette and Chisel, an art center similar to The Art League in Alexandria. She also studied with renowned art restorer Helen Oh at The Art Institute of Chicago.

Born in Miami, Adrienne moved a lot while growing up, finding her first inspiration to paint in her grandfather, who took up oil landscapes in his retirement. Later she discovered Mary Cassatt while studying art history and graphic design at Auburn University.



There followed a period that Adrienne describes as "painting a lot of pensive young women looking out in space, wondering about life." With marriage and parenthood, the phase passed, and she came into her own as a serious portraitist.

"Maybe someday," she quips, "I'll be painting little old ladies sitting on park benches."

Living in Brussels brought Adrienne close to European masters like Rubens, Vermeer and Rembrandt, and she traveled throughout Europe to study at museums. At one point, she placed a painting of her children in a Belgian gallery, but didn't really plan to sell it. Even though she had attached what she considered a high price on it, the work did sell, and the commissions kept coming.

Back in Chicago, Adrienne returned to The Art Institute, where she continued copying to polish and perfect her skills. Although she prefers commissions, she has shown her work at The Art League Gallery and the AWC Gallery in Brussels, as well as the DuPage Art League and Schaefer Gallery, both in Wheaton, Illinois. She also participated in the *Faces of the Fallen* project at Arlington National Cemetery, painting four soldiers who died in Iraq.

Adrienne is a member of The Great Falls Studios, The Art League and the Portrait Society of America. During the Great Falls Studios Tour on October 14, she will offer a painting demonstration at The Artists' Atelier, located at 776 Walker Road in Great Falls (see Calendar). For more information about her work, visit www.portraitartist.com/kralick, or phone 703-716-4299. *E*

FACING PAGE: "COLLECTING SHELLS," OIL ON CANVAS, 30" X 40"; THIS PAGE: "GRANDPA," OIL ON CANVAS, 20" X 24"; AND "KATHERINE," OIL ON CANVAS, 22" X 28"