

Artist of the Month

Gary Holland

By Audrée Peters

Nationally known portrait painter Gary Holland, of Boise, Idaho, will be one of the featured artists in residence at the juried Arizona Fine Art Expo in Scottsdale.

This is the third year he will be in residence at this Thunderbird Artists event.

Holland will have his own "working studio" area and will paint for the enjoyment of visitors and instruct visiting painters on his techniques.

"I primarily use oils," Holland says. "But at the Expo I also will be doing a lot of pencil work on canvas, as well as oil painting. You communicate things differently with just pencil."

He will also be participating in other Thunderbird Artists fine art events during and after his stay at Expo, including the Fountain Hills Fine Arts and Wine Event March 21 to 23, and will conduct a workshop for the Arizona Art Supply Company.

"One of the reasons I like to teach is because it is really hard to find good art instruction that teaches a common mixture of traditional art and the modern, and I try to blend the two," he says.

Holland teaches workshops all over the country, working individually with eight to 10 apprentices at a time.

"I believe I can turn a person, if they're motivated to practice

about six hours a day, into a professional rent-earning artist in two years," he says.

While he is a prolific painter of many subjects, including pets, cowboys, landscapes and floral still life, his greatest enjoyment is in portraiture and figure painting.

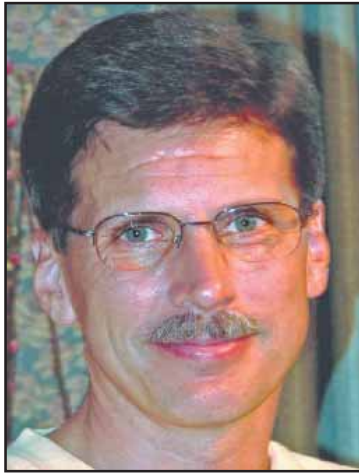
He combines many techniques in his paintings, which use color to convey emotion and environment.

Whether it's a detailed painting of a cowboy or a forgotten child of any culture, his touch blends impressionism -- triggering the viewer's imagination -- with explicit detail that shows the soul of the subject.

He emphasizes that the ambience is just as important as the person. "I paint the energy," he says. "I bring abstraction into my paintings or whatever it takes to communicate what I feel in those people's eyes. When I do figures and portraits I really try to focus people on the eyes -- the windows of the soul -- to see within the person."

As a youngster, Holland had no idea he was artistic, although he was always fascinated with the play of light and shadows. His father laughed nervously when he told him about his observations, apparently concerned his son would embrace a poorly-paid lifetime profession.

"Then when I was about 11 years old, I went to a movie



Artist Gary Holland has given his heart to the disadvantaged and orphaned children -- "the lost children" -- many of whom are living in third world countries.

about the life of a famous artist," he says.

He remembers that he was mesmerized, even to the point of being taken by the play of light in the garret where the artist worked.

"After that, I just always knew that was what I wanted to do. "Of course it didn't happen that easily," he adds with a laugh.

"I tried doing other things. I was in the military twice, one of those at Luke Air Force Base (in Glendale) in the early 70s. Then I went to college, but didn't like the art courses, they didn't teach much."

Holland got two degrees in music instead, then a master's degree in counseling in psychology and, eventually, a master's degree in art.

When Holland went to Haiti as a volunteer with a medical team several years ago, he was overwhelmed with emotion over the plight of the disadvantaged and orphaned children.

He says that while he was there he had "a kind of religious experience."

"And I said, 'All right, God, I'm going to help kids the rest of my life. What do I do?'"

"I didn't have an answer then," he says, "but I knew I was going to do something."

The 14 paintings he did after that trip were the start of his non-profit organization, For the Children, Inc.

The paintings are now part of a traveling show "that communicate how the orphans are pretty much hidden in their societies -- they're called 'foster



Artist Gary Holland captured in oil this busy day at the "Kunming Vegetable Market" that he observed on one of his trips to China.

children' -- and there are about 550,000 of them. Up to a third of them are adoptable at any one time. So that is communicated through my paintings, and we take donations."

He says they are getting ready to do the first traveling show of the Children of the World Series this winter in Scottsdale. The show will then spend a month at a time in hospitals all over the country.

He also is currently completing a series of books and paintings that provide support for poor orphanages in such third world countries as Vietnam, Haiti and China.

"Most everything I do now is humanitarian art," he says. "Not many people do that kind of thing, but I decided maybe that's how God wants me to work with kids."

Holland's work can be viewed online at www.forthchildreninc.org, www.hollandgallery.com and www.justbeautifulportraits.com.

"I really just want to paint these children," Gary Holland says. "You can tell...my heart is in it." "Dignity" portrays an orphan in Haiti.



"Dancing Boy" by Gary Holland depicts the concentration of a Native American youth at a pow-wow.