



PAINTER

■ A NEWSLETTER FROM **BRENDA J. CLARK** ■ **SUMMER 2007** ■ **WWW.BRENDAJCLARK.COM**

Up on the Web

Bright colors and bold strokes still shout forth – when you visit the web site of Brenda J. Clark.

“The web site certainly mirrors Brenda’s palette and her sense of design,” says Sada Omoto, art historian and former colleague of Brenda’s at Michigan State University. “It’s friendly just like when you visit the gallery in Leland. It is light and breezy, easy to navigate, and lets the viewer get a strong feel for Brenda’s Expressionistic style.”

In fact, the site was designed and is managed by one of Brenda’s former students – Cindy Szymas of Borns Advertising in Grand Haven, Michigan.

Free verse poetry accompanies many of the paintings on the web site. Written by her husband, Johnston, the free verse describes the emotions of Brenda during her painting sessions. Each painting page also offers directional copy for visiting the actual location.

“We have received a lot of positive feedback about our new web site,” notes Brenda. “The web site allows our patrons and visitors to the gallery to discover new paintings and introduce their friends to my work.”

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The homepage of Brenda’s web site.

BRENDA J. CLARK

TWO UNDERSTUDIES

Helene Claire (four and a half) and Flora June (recently two) paint often in their own studio. Their studio, our kitchen, consists of the island cupboard, mommy’s paper, glitter glue, acrylic paints and big brushes with lots of water and lots of rags. Helene Claire paints freely and likes to layer, while Flora June is brushing anything everywhere and learning about colors. “Purple” and “blue,” she proclaims, are her favorites. What a treat to see their mark making and hear their comments.



Helene Claire (4 1/2) and Flora June (2).

My Childhood Homestead — Growing Up On the Farm

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Missouri Homestead – II, 59” x 30”, Acrylic on arches paper. painted on location in October 2006.



Helene Claire (left) and Flora June (right), enjoying ice cream at the Harbor House in Leland. Needless to say, they keep us on the run with charming notions and emotions!

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■ CONTACT **BRENDA J. CLARK** AT **WWW.BRENDAJCLARK.COM**
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A Walk Through www.brendajclark.com

Links on Brenda’s web site

- **About the artist** – Read about how Brenda sees herself as an artist and painter.
- **What’s new** – This page tells you about new projects, exhibitions, and new subject matter undertaken by the artist.
- **Paintings** – Your link online to the bold Expressionistic style of Brenda J. Clark. New paintings are added once they have been documented by a professional photographer.
- **Commissions** – If you have a Leelanau (or other) scene in mind for your home or cottage, click on the commissions link. Brenda enjoys fulfilling your creative visions. . . for memory’s sake, wedding anniversaries, birthdays, children’s rooms, or as gifts to caring parents.
- **Testimonials** – Read the thoughts of patrons, of people who have commissioned a painting, and of individuals who participate in pedagogical roles in the world of art.
- **Gallery location** – The gallery is easy to find in Leland. From Main Street, follow the sidewalk along side of Leelanau Books back toward the harbor and Lake Michigan. By car, turn between the Harbor House and Leland Mercantile and park on Lake Street near the Harbor Square complex. If you don’t remember the location, look us up on the web at www.brendajclark.com, at www.lelandmi.com, or www.leelanau.com.
- **Contact** – Johnston, Brenda’s spouse, always seems to be at the gallery. You may reach us at the gallery (231) 256-0026, and via cell at (231) 342-9359 or (231) 342-1228. Via e-mail: clarkbb@msu.edu or through the web site’s e-mail address.



Farm Road – masked, Acrylic on arches paper, 26”x 41”

A Special Thanks to All of Our Patrons...

We thank you for purchasing art from the Brenda J. Clark Gallery during the past year. It was especially pleasing to see many young families with children beginning to collect art. Our gratitude is immense. Thank you, again.



Fall for Art in Leelanau County 2006 *Tour Winner*

As part of the second annual Fall for Art in Leelanau County tour during Columbus Day weekend, October 6–8, 2006, the Brenda J. Clark Gallery offered the grand prize as the featured artist. Brenda’s painting, *Fall in Leelanau at DH Day*, was won by Frank and Mary Ann Krebs of Glen Arbor. This year the tour runs from October 5-7.

Left: Mr. Krebs and Brenda hold up the couple’s new painting.

Inspiration Point

As part of last fall’s painting regimen, Brenda completed several paintings out on location in the Glen Arbor area, including three at Inspiration Point. To view these paintings, please visit www.brendajclark.com, click on the “paintings” link, and scroll down to the three thumbnail images of Inspiration Point.

“BRENDA’S BRILLIANT COLORS, LIKE MARIN’S COLORS, EXIST NOT TO COPY AN APPEARANCE BUT TO REVEAL A MEANING.”

Lyrical Realists

by Ray Betts

Seeing Brenda J. Clark’s paintings immediately struck a well-loved chord for me – “John Marin.”

In her own highly distinctive way Brenda is carrying on Marin’s love affair with shores and hillsides very different from those he painted, mostly around New England. Yet, the boldness of the paintings and the stubborn individualism of the two painters link them in the same tradition. That tradition began a century ago when a series of explosions shook the calm in American arts.

One of those concussions found young John Marin, alongside Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley, and Georgia O’Keefe, pioneering a new freedom for painters at Alfred Stieglitz’s obscure “291” Gallery in New York. The Modernist “lunatic revolutionaries,” with Marin in the vanguard kept right on painting the real American scene just as they visualized it. In fact, Marin preferred to be called “a lyrical realist, if anything.” So as others moved beyond them into ever more abstract and mysterious Expressionism, Marin and his friends insisted on plunging further into the meaning and the “feel” of scenes that everyday people could see for themselves, if only they dared to look deeply.

It is in that bold, individual “feel” for the scene and its challenge to the viewer, rather than in any superficial resemblance, that Brenda’s continuing search recalls Marin.

The kinship of spirit breaks through in practical ways, too. Brenda’s brilliant colors, like Marin’s colors, exist not to copy an appearance but to reveal a meaning. They surprise us, they free us from our assumptions, and they show us the struggle to give us a real place at a single moment, as fully as mere paint and the painter humanly can.

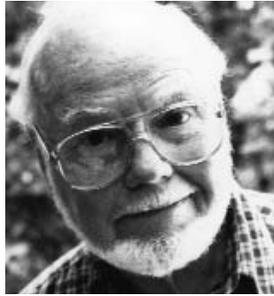
Where Marin created his own geometry, with wild lines breaking free to soar off in all directions, as if extending the subject itself, Brenda has us looking through her heavy dark lines and masses to make her bright colors nearly transparent – achieving a kind of stained glass affect, as in a Roualt painting.

Finally, such special effects call for special frames.

Marin experimented with all kinds of framing devices inside and around his watercolors and oils. Similarly, Brenda’s husband, Johnston Mitchell, expertly converts antique and other frames to give even more impact to her acrylics.

With Marin or Brenda J. Clark, it was and is all about the paint becoming the sign of freedom itself for the individual painter and the individual viewer.

Ray Betts is an Episcopal priest. He is retired as an instructor from the Art Academy of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio, and summers in Omena.



Overlooking Two Glens, Acrylic on canvas, 14" x 10"



Sharnowski Road Farm – masked, Acrylic on arches paper, 20"x 29-1/2," requisitioned by the University of Michigan for its new Cardiovascular Center in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

In addition, the painting, Tasseling Gauthier, was requisitioned and a commission was requested for a painting similar to Poppies Talking to Iris – II. If you would like to view these paintings on our web site, please go to: <http://www.brendajclark.com/news1.htm>.

Summer 2007— This summer I am painting a lot to the south in the Glen Arbor area. If you would like to see these paintings as they are completed, please send an e-mail, Subject: “Summer 2007” to clarkbb@msu.edu.

My Childhood Homestead

Growing Up On the Farm

by Brenda J. Clark

My husband (and the editor of this newsletter), Johnston, often asks me if anything connects between growing up on a farm and being the kind of painter that I am. While this farm-and-painter question is not really something that I dwell on as an artist, there probably is a connection. Maybe, I would call it a perk!

I grew up 10 miles north of Green City, Missouri, on the Clark homestead that was owned by my father's father and his father's father. Our house was tiny... only two bedrooms upstairs – one for mom and dad, with my older brother, Damon, and I sharing the other. We lived on the farm until I was in 6th grade.

During October of that year, the house burned to the ground while we were at school... leaving mom and dad and us kids with only a television, stamp-book rocker, coffee table and two end tables – all yanked from the living room on the opposite end where the house caught fire. Everything else was lost – including all of my childhood items. Mom, dad, my brother and I lost all of those sentimental things that tend to shape one's life.

While the tale of how the fire happened is an odd story, we were thankful that my mom was able to escape that morning around 8:30 a.m. with only burns (that eventually healed). My brother and I arrived home with Granny, watching and following the towering smoke all the way from the school to our farm. It was probably the first time I ever saw my father cry.

Indeed, growing up on the farm has many memories: 12 years of getting very involved with farm work and farm play.

My Hoe

Some of my fondest memories are of working in the garden with my mom. I loved to hoe... and I was good at it – very tidy and efficient about getting out those weeds without chopping off the plants. We had two huge gardens. And, of course, we helped Grandma and Grandpa Montgomery with their gardens, too. I was also good at planting. I could reach into the bag and grab just the right amount of seeds it took for the corn or whatever we were planting. My brother, Damon, did not enjoy it quite as much. He was a bit more entertained with finding worms, then chasing and scaring me with them.

Riding Herd

Minus the fussing and teasing, Damon and I were a team on the farm. We each had a horse. Colty was my Shetland pony, who I finally got to gallop after many months of trotting. Damon's horse was named Paint – a large pinto with brown and blonde patches.

We rode our horses to count cattle for dad. We also used them to herd and move the cattle from one farm to the other – some five miles apart – starting early in the morning around 5 a.m. Our job was to make sure

that the cattle did not get on neighboring lawns or scurry through open fences. I only recall one time that the cattle found an open fence that we missed along the highway. In an instant, all of the cattle took off so fast – stampeding through the opening into a barren field. It was on that trip that I learned to gallop Colty. On the way back, my dad slapped her on the butt and off I went galloping to my surprise. It certainly was much more comfortable than trotting everywhere.

We were very little when my older brother and I started doing all of this work with the cattle. Having two little girls now, I can't imagine how we were allowed to help as much as we did and that more cattle did not get loose.

Mischief's Land

Our horses were nothing fancy; they were used for work. Colty and Paint gave us friendship; they were our pets. We learned how to groom and saddle our horses as part of our responsibilities on the farm. We did not show them in 4H or participate in the rodeo barrel racing as my girlfriends chose to do. Later, I had to choose between softball and 4H, and I chose softball. I was never truly a cowgirl... just a farm girl who had a horse.

Venturing into mischief's land, we would race our horses in the creek. Sometimes we would stop to catch minnows. When our city cousins visited, we became trainers because our cousins always wanted to ride. There are many other horse stories that I am sharing with our oldest daughter, Helene Claire, who enjoys her own storytelling right now. I'll do the same when Flora June has grown a little more and is fully conversing. In retrospect, I suppose that I soaked up many glimpses of the farmland around me while riding atop Colty. It was a perspective that I otherwise would not have known.

Great, Grand, Huge

There is a great gravel road that takes you to our old farm. So long, winding and dusty, it is still there and seems to be a great part of my memories of the farm. We rode our bikes up and down this road many times and occasionally all the way to Highway 129, stopping at the neighbors along the way.

Mom always knew when we were nearby. We were constantly reminded not to argue when we were off riding because all of the neighbors could hear us. The road still has those slight ups and downs and serves as a grand entry into the farm where the house once stood. The old barn is still standing, although the garage, hen house and other outhouses have all collapsed over the years.

Mowing the lawn – our huge lawn – was part of what we did as kids (and for both sets of grandparents). Mom was very detailed, and I suppose we caught on from her about grooming the lawn. Missouri (the *Show Me* state) does that... we trim and trim and make sure the lines are straight when we cut the lawn – a little unlike our more natural, northern Michigan grooming.

All of the details of growing up on a farm seem unique for me. Perhaps, I take it for granted that everyone has had this experience. I have so many stories from that time on the farm.

– continued opposite, on page 5...

Leelanau Light

by Faan Yeen Sidor

I love Leelanau. The rolling hills, clear lakes and cool forests fill my spirit and calm my mind.

Similar to the south of France where the meeting waters of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean create a light that inspired the original Impressionists, Leelanau's light creates colors in the landscape and certainly in the sunsets that are also inspirational.

Brenda J. Clark's paintings capture these feelings and speak to the heart of the experience of Leelanau. This is what attracted me to Brenda's paintings, in particular "Iris Talking to Poppies."

The creative process itself and what appeals to us artistically is an expression, or psychologists would say, a projection of our own needs and desires. By examining a person's reaction to a particular work of art or visual design, psychologists can uncover unconscious wishes, conflicts, feelings etc. What one likes or dislikes in a painting reflects their internal experience.

Art can be evocative, causing a strong emotional reaction or a sense of calm. When I was decorating my office I wanted to choose artwork that contributed to a soothing atmosphere. In addition, I wanted the painting to be something that I would enjoy and one which had meaning to me. I chose a Brenda J. Clark painting in part because of the connection to Leelanau but also because her style and use of color greatly appealed to me. On a deeper level "Iris Talking to Poppies" represented to me connectedness both in nature as well as between people. It felt at home in a room that is primarily used for "talk therapy."

In the end, however, we choose and live with art that we enjoy, whatever the reason; the colors are pretty, it reminds us of a great vacation, or it goes well in our living room.

As Freud once said, "Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar."

Faan Yeen Sidor, Psy.D



Iris Talking to Poppies
Acrylic on arches paper, 8" x 15"

FINE ART FOR EVERYONE.

RECENT LARGER PAINTINGS

Houdek Birch Mirage – masked, 60" x 41" – \$7,500 + tax.

April Birch, 23" X 30" – \$1,800 + tax.

Windy Farm – masked, 2 at 23" X 30" – 5,400 + tax.

Farm Road – masked, 26" X 41" – \$4,200 + tax.

Missouri Homestead II, 59" X 29 1/2" – \$7,000 + tax.

Looking Down on Green City, 2 at 23" X 30" – \$4,200 + tax..

Gauthier Road – masked, 23 1/2" X 41 1/2" – \$4,000 + tax.

To view in color, please send an e-mail to: clarkbb@msu.edu.

My Childhood Homestead – *Growing Up On the Farm*

More Stories

Once, when Damon and I were riding in the hay feeder while my dad was moving it, a skunk surfaced, scared from underneath the leftover hay. No, we didn't get sprayed. And there was the jumping of ditches on our horses. Yet when I walked Colty by rein across the ditch one day, she stomped on my foot. Many lessons are learned, ironically enough, through trial and error.

The City

When the fire took our home, we moved into Green City – just off the town square. We would never move back to the farm, but at the time it didn't make me cry. All of the new things in town were of interest to us as two growing children. Looking back as an adult, I truly treasure what fueled my livelihood as a kid. Even though our family home is no longer on the old homestead, I still have vivid memories and emotions about how we lived on the farm and what it meant to me.

A couple of years ago when I painted up at the farm along side of that road, my mom, Helene Claire, Flora June, and Johnston were along. Suddenly, from over the horizon, a couple of ranchers rode up on their horses to check on some cattle. They were curious who we were, not realizing that it was our farm they were working on as employees of the man who rents the land. What a treat for the girls to see... two real cowboys. What a treat for Grandma, Johns, and me, too. This is the kind of experience that I remember: Working hard, straight from the heart, real drama.

Passion

I believe the passion that I have for my memories is close to the passion that I attempt to capture when I paint. No one may quite understand my color choices or my mark making. Yet, I hope that most develop some feelings from my paintings, and that these feelings stir them to think, examine, and imagine. Such thinking is all that I want, along with the subliminal beauty of the paint stroke.





Whaleback's Trillium - I, Acrylic on arches paper

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MY NEW WEB SITE IS UP AND RUNNING

Launched last fall, my web site has been recently updated. It features almost 50 paintings, with most of the paintings done on location in Leelanau County. The web site also includes a piece rendered in the Amish country of mid Michigan and a larger painting that I completed last fall of my childhood homestead in northeast Missouri. ■ During the winter months, I set out to develop a body of work featuring my *Masking In* technique. This series of nine paintings is available via e-mail in PDF format. ■ And I have experimented with some round paper pieces. These, along with the new *Masking In* series, are being framed by Johnston and our local craftsman from *Warden's Point Woodworking*. They should be ready some time in July.

Sincerely, Brenda



Missouri Homestead - I,
Acrylic on arches paper,
23" x 15,"
painted April 2004.
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