

international artist



THE WORLD

Art Prize Challenge

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Mustafa Gunen becomes so absorbed with his creations that he loses all track of time.

PAINTING & SLEEPING

During both painting and sleeping I never notice how time passes by. That's why I always stop painting a few hours before any appointment, just in case I miss it. Sometimes, just as I get ready to go to bed, something wrong on the canvas catches my eye, and I begin painting. I am so intensely focused that I barely notice the morning sunlight pouring in on my work.

I use one of the rooms in my apartment as a studio. Because I paint extra large canvases I don't use an easel. Instead I have fixed a long, narrow wooden counter against a wall and covered it with a sheet of nylon, to keep the paint from spilling onto it. I put the canvas on this counter and lean it against the wall. When it is necessary to fix the canvas so it won't move, I just hold it with my left hand, press it against the wall, and keep painting with my right hand. When I need to elevate a canvas, I simply place a couple of small boxes underneath it.

I don't use a palette. Instead, I have two pieces of acetate, one small and one large. Onto the small one I

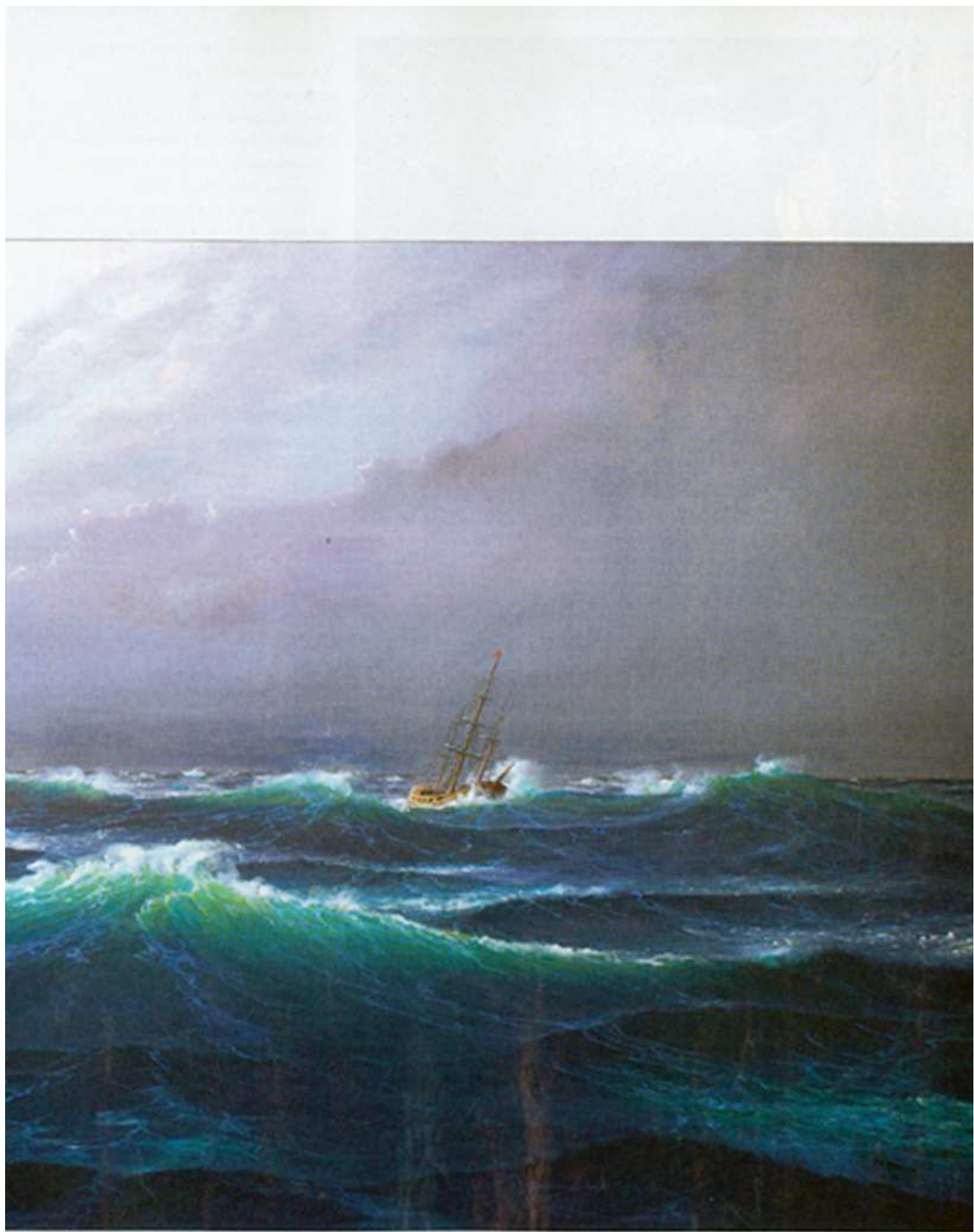
squeeze the paint, and on the large one I mix the paints and spread them onto the canvas. I use nothing except a palette knife and brushes of different sizes. Sometimes I use my hand and my finger to rub the paint onto the canvas.

Wandering around in the painting

Since I live in a country surrounded by sea on three sides, I have no difficulty finding compositions for my seascapes. During the summer I travel to different coasts, and soak up the colors of that location. I put up a small canvas on the easel and do a color study to illustrate the scene. I also take photographs and later I make use of the color sketches and pictures to create larger paintings in my studio. I only make paintings of the photos I have taken. Sometimes I do make use of pictures or printed photos taken by others, but I never copy from them.

I usually take imaginary walks in my photographs and am always inspired by them. For instance, I really liked the rock formations in the Grand Canyon in Colorado and





At least sunlight, 39 x 55" (99 x 140cm)



Colorado Rock and Sea, 39 x 55" (99 x 140cm)

Night at the Beach, 43 x 80" (109 x 213cm)



blended them into a sea painting. I walk around in my own compositions, look at the view from different points and then express them on a different canvas. Sometimes, in this way, I start six or seven paintings at once.

There have been times when I was so inspired by a pond after heavy rain that I imagined it as the ocean, and then expressed it on the canvas. In other words, most of my paintings are the fruit of my imagination. I do not continue painting any composition unless I feel I can live in it. I stop and put it aside until I feel the time is just right.

I have one painting that is almost finished, but it has been waiting to be completed for five years. Since I can't feel myself in it, I am unable to finish it. □



Tools of his trade

Art in the Making



STAGE 1

As you can see here I never draw on the canvas before I start painting. Since the sky is seen in the background that's where I start. I decide where the light source is to be and tone the colors of the clouds to show the light coming from the left.

If I ever have to mix a lot of paint to cover a large canvas I simply squeeze the paint tubes one by one onto the canvas and use a brush to mix them directly on the surface.



STAGE 2

Here I've placed the big wave as seen from my viewpoint. I get all the color I need by mixing only five colors. From there I'm able to mix exactly the right tone and the right amount needed to get exactly the color I'm imagining.



STAGE 3

I have painted-in the breaking foam on the big wave. To avoid your seascapes looking like rugged landscapes it is essential that your waves appear to be translucent when seen against the light. Because waves also cast their own shadows the tone and color of these shadows must be placed accurately.

I use only five colors of oil paint

Titanium White
Lamp Black
Cadmium Yellow Pale Hue
Cadmium Red Deep Hue
Phthalo Blue



STAGE 4

I have placed the broken foam and white water wash and started to detail the foam on the surface. The curve of the waves have a rhythm so you must show the energy moving in the right direction.



STAGE 5

Here I'm adding more holes to show where the foam is breaking up. Broken waves have multiple patterns which move with and against the wave as it breaks.

STAGE 6

Finally, if someone looking at my painting does not feel like walking on this beach, sitting on that rock and fishing, or does not sense the acrid smell of iodine or get seasick, then I think there is something missing in that painting.





Leakage of the Light, 43 x 80" (109 x 213cm)



Battle of the Waves, 43 x 80" (109 x 213cm)

About the artist

Born in 1956 in Kirsehir, a mid-Anatolian city in Turkey, I suffered from poverty during my childhood. At primary school in Ankara I was highly intrigued by pencil drawing. By the time I left school I had made about two hundred pages of picture stories. I was not able to continue my education due to financial problems and started working as an apprentice in my father's furniture workshop. Later, saving my tips, I bought synthetic paints and started making my first oil paintings.

We were living with our two married elder brothers in the same flat, and I was not allowed to paint pictures because of the smell of the paint, and with the fear that I would ignore my job. Sometimes this prohibition could become even tougher, because my elder brothers would either mix my paints or empty the cans so that I couldn't paint. However, after struggling for a long time,

they understood that I would not give up, and they let me paint pictures in a small corner of our balcony. I worked during the day, and for years had to paint in the cold winter and hot summer nights until dawn. One day, an idea struck me: Why shouldn't I paint pictures on the furniture? Such a thing had never been tried before at that time. The idea was met with some suspicion and some 'why-nots'. At last I started painting pictures, and some ornamentation, on the furniture. However, upon my father's bankruptcy during the severe economic crisis in the 1970s, I painted pictures only as gifts for my close friends. This went on until 1993 when I met my benefactor, Mr. Nevzat Boztas, a real art-lover and great art collector. With his sincere interest and encouragement I quit my job and shut down my workshop. Then I sold my flat and started painting.



Wet Sands, 39 x 55" (99 x 140cm)



Wishing to be alone, 43 x 80" (109 x 213cm)

As for my painting style, nature is my teacher, and I chose a most difficult subject, the SEA. My sole aim is to be the foremost painter of the sea. When people look at my paintings, I not only want them to just see them, but also to feel as if they were in them. Judging by what people say after looking at my paintings, I think I have made some remarkable progress on my way to reaching this aim. Once a customer decided not to buy a picture of a rough sea, saying he felt seasick when he looked at it, and preferred a calmer picture instead. Other people express their feelings such as: "I felt salt water in my mouth" or "I can smell the iodine spreading from the picture," ; they say "For a moment I got lost in it and felt as if I was there and having a holiday."

I am deeply honored by these remarks, and they boost my hunger for painting better pictures. □

