



The image that started the painting. In keeping with the formal method, photos were collected since the subjects were older now.



Helen was about four. Though blurry it satisfied what was needed.



This image was taken of Irene when the project got started.



The sketch was made for the size of the canvas, 24" x 30". Fitting in all the elements was the focus.



Every painting gets composed in Poser, an electronic mannequin program. You can clearly see the figures composed in this image are duplicated in the painting.



Images were taken of the neighbors, to continue the arrangement of light.



Color sketches were started.



No stone was left unturned to get started.





Painting was started in earnest using the new medium of powdered pigment mixed with castor oil. The paint took about a month before it started to set up and dry.



Mother Daughter VIII, Second state, 24" x 30", Tuesday, November 25, 2014

Things ground to a halt because of the complicated steps to finish the work. It was not unlike the plumber who always has leaky pipes at home. A commission, even a small one, drives the incentive to finish. Here a different medium was used to stop drying for a month if not many months. The idea was to allow the whole painting to be wet for months on end, leaving only a flawless creation. But the medium started to dry and work had to stop. The key element is the long drying oil. Castor seems perfect except it has a very slippery nature. It could take longer to dry but in keeping the paint in the place it's put is a struggle with castor oil.

Wednesday February 17, 2021 work started anew. After two miniature portraits the full size seems like a walk in the park though the work is dry. Using black castor oil in the hopes just by trying all the castor oils there might be one that works, meaning to hold the pigment on the surface, dry very slowly, 25 days or more, not slide, though some mingling is important to keep blending by itself but still holding an edge on a single fine hairbrush stroke. The toughest part is not having transparent colors while painting over with a lighter color, avoided like the plague. Removing some of the old paint with a solvent revealing the scraped gessoed smooth as a baby's bottom, gessoing over the surface would not be necessary. Irene's face is dead on but Helen's left eye needs to be moved. Seven years it took to get back to finishing such a portrait. In the old days you would have a commission and getting even a few dollars was motivation for spending hours working on the transparent surface. On Tuesday, November 25, 2014 Tom just could not go on to finish it. Getting back to the work, the edges need to be addressed. Close observation shows that all the tricks of the form making trade need to be used even in the light and shadow form takes place by the lightening or darkening of the area of color.

Bouguereau would laugh at my attempts. Demanding I start all over and do it right in just as much time. No manner of adjusting the dried paint can come within 50% of acceptable. But still Tom goes on to finish. A nice 8-year hiatus from formal portrait painting. Not really, Tom almost finished Solomon & The Rose of Sharon. Contemplating the moving of transparent oil across a surface. Stabbing with a camel hairbrush of several hairs is just as good as a sable as Bouguereau would have it.



Rose of Sharon, 4' x 3', oil on canvas,
November 1, 2017

Irene went on a Treasa road trip and Tom put this back on the easel.

In 2011 the reclining figure was gessoed out and the bed linen was painted, retouching the Calla Lilies, removing the drum and chalice.

Taking forever to finish. Now it's on to Irene's makeup and to apply the lace. The lace will be rolled on using a rubber roller with lace glued to it. Once rolled in white paint it will apply a careful delicate lace pattern over the camisole.

Now slowly the reworking goes on. Every aspect hashed over until it just passes muster of what fine oil painting is about. Mostly that means making everything random and effortless looking. Never making a brush stroke without all the meaning it can have. As you refine the almost haphazard looking strokes into a face it becomes more likable but it should have been likable at the get go though many times it is not.

In a reworked painting, dealing with old paint is the worst. Painting over something to make it right is often a nightmare.

This painting left large areas filled in unfinished and now all the unfinished parts have to be addressed with new paint and edges. A most difficult thing to do when you rely on a "a la prima transparent method".



February 27, 2021

Work progresses slowly. Irene has started commenting on the progress. Helen is at college but did chime in today with an "Okay. That's my hair cut back then." It's a little long here, which is good and the variegation of the hair is excellent since it looks combed but is ruffled enough to make it a great image to work from. Referring back to Bouguereau constantly makes for evening out the flesh color. Making only the form shaping simple but now abandoning the personality of the model. If it looks good in an image taken of the work in

progress, it may be on the way to being finished. Never is the form abandoned when fine details of everything are formed with transparent castor oil with powdered pigment against a polished coating of gesso. Removing the paint is an easy manner of whipping the surface with a color ball touched with a stripper. Then following up with a whip of castor oil to stop the removal. The old paint becomes liquid again in a most strange manner. Maybe a way to reconstitute the dried castor oil and powdered pigment will become apparent soon.

A long time ago someone mentioned a passage in Siddhartha by Herman Hesse. It was about a master artist painting with slow deliberate strokes where everything was perfect. This is the stroke to be achieved. As I work through the hair of Helen, all I'm looking for is a master transparent stroke that holds as much reality as possible. The fun thing is that the stroke has a tremendous possibility of meaning everything and nothing at the same time when the mind fills in the blank like believability in the movies.

A slow stroke with a loaded large sable with the right color in the right place slowly moving creating a final area all at once.



March 3, 2021, Irene's birthday

Work continues with the background finished using normal oil paint with $\frac{1}{2}$ Damar varnish and $\frac{1}{2}$ " stand oil with 1% oil of cloves and Helen's hair and face with castor oil and powdered pigment which is staying fluid. Next to finish the clothing with the normal medium while continuing the bigger mission. Still have to deal with the imperfections of Irene's face. May just have to leave it be.



Saturday, March 6, 2021

Have not worked on painting for two days waiting for the courage to recolor Helen's face by taking just the right color and stippling it into the existing color to make the right color. In this case, violet to take the orange out.

Did remove the face in the mirror and even it out the outline.

Friday, March 12, 2021

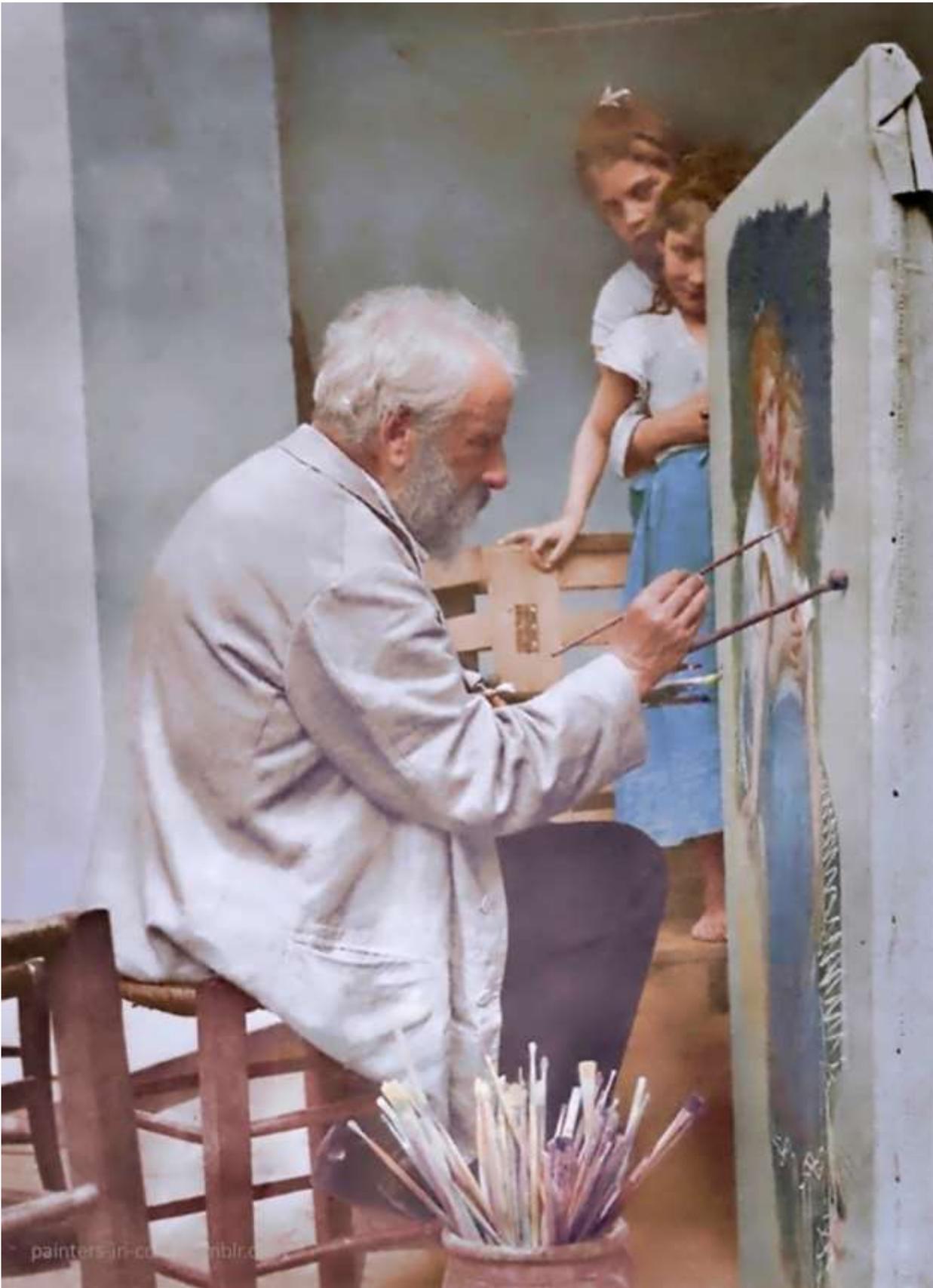
Carefully correcting Helen. Looking forward to moving to the mirror. Still wet and perfect.



Adolphe William Bouguereau (French, b.1825, d.1905), (detail) Girl Eating Porridge, 1874, oil on canvas, 38 1/2 x 24 1/2 in. (97.8 x 62.2 cm)

When you look at the eye above in his painting of the porridge girl you can see it's finished to the nth degree. In the old days I used to paint with a medium that dried in about 15 days. This new medium has a funny quality about it that does not sit well with a high degree of finish. It's close but not close enough. The paint tends to coagulate not allowing to create fine detail.

Studying Bouguereau. He applied this same meticulous procedure to create paintings. He used sketches and plaster casts. He even used paintings to guide his brush. Looking at a painting reveals how to develop form. An image is not good at revealing how to create form.



Figuring out how Bouguereau painted is still a mystery. In this colorized image you can see his brushes were not exceptional. Most were bristle. His medium is a mystery to me. I think he did have various mediums to address the drying time.

Trained under this painting. Need to go visit it and take some more images. It's the fluid transparency that gets me. Does anyone have a Bouguereau "How to" Facebook page?

Are you on Instagram? I Have been posting 60 second videos of the painting on the easel. A work started in 2014! I just did not have the strength to finish it. It's a lot like the plumber who cannot fix his own leaky pipes. Portrait painting is the Mount Everest of painting and when it's to look like someone, the mountain is even higher. But it's on the chopping block and will be done to the best of my ability.

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Work continues with severe lack of motivation. Live streaming is making it tolerable. The paint on Helen's face is still wet.

Having trouble with oil wiped on dry areas. Not going to do that again.

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Work is nearing completion on the faces. Now on to touching up the dresses. Using regular oil paints mixed with straight Damar varnish to make the paint to stick to the dried paint. The strange nature of castor oil mixed with powdered pigment creates a slick surface when thoroughly dried.



Finally finishing this albatross. Started in 2014, just did not have the strength to finish it. It is like the plumber who always has leaky pipes at home.

Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Finishing the details of the old painted clothes and flesh. Touching up with straight Damar varnish mixed with regular tube oil paint. In a year or so, will spray Damar varnish on it to even out and cement the surface. The original thought was to have the whole work wet and fluid, fleshing out the major passages of the flesh and cloth but work ground to a halt because of the tremendous pressure to finish. As best as good be the

unfinished faces, flesh and clothes were left to dry. Helen's faces were removed to the canvas and repainted. The clothes were started with a wire mannequin dressed for Irene and Helen. No images were taken of the dressed-up mannequins. Painting cloth is best done by laying in the lights and darks with broad strokes using the random nature of the strokes as a stepping off point for bringing it to life. If it looks good stop.

Easter Sunday April 4, 2021

Having a good time since touched, deciding what needs to be done. Helen's baby clef and her dress need to be thought about. Since this was an oil sketch that dried over painting the dress can only be done to smooth the surface and give the sharp linen cloth effect. The mannequin has been dressed and placed. There are lots of places to put paint and still keep the transparent nature. Setting up the chicken wire mannequin with the two dresses is ongoing.

The joke is portrait painting is the Mount Everest of painting. Being a portrait painter all my life, scraping by, always looking for the glimmer of a commission anywhere, leaves you with painting the family and many unfinished portraits. Even my portrait is unfinished. As soon as I finish a huge full size of my daughter relaxing as an astronaut off Saturn, I'm moving on to do the real important portraits even if I do not get paid.

April 11, 2021

Painting linen cloth in the manner of Bouguereau.

Working on the fabric. The chicken wire mannequin dressed and lit. Using it and images of Bouguereau clothes to change the oil sketch that dried into full form where each stroke follows a natural flow of the fabric.

https://youtu.be/Uu_vJTaY0V0

May 5, 2021

Still have it on the easel not getting to it. Decided to call it finished and present it to Irene on Mother's Day 2021.

Summary:

This work was done to match the traditional academic methods. Starting off with an idea and then filling in all the blanks. Sure, you could have just painted the first image in this document, but it would not have the academic charm of the finished work. Each face is featured by themselves with little interaction. More could be done. The next work will strive for intimate involvement between the figures.

The original image could have been used verbatim.