

Tip #20

Finding Beauty Wherever You Are

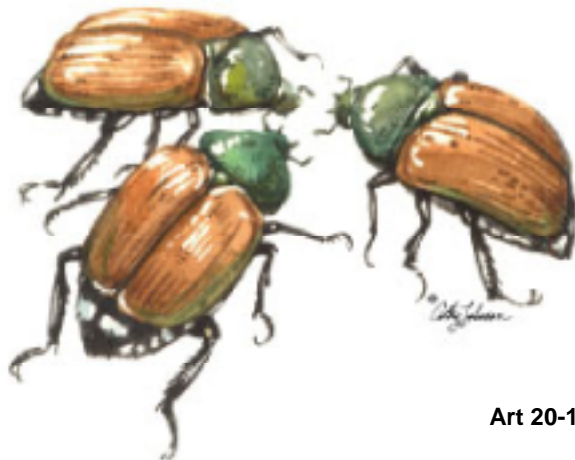
We humans are prone to make judgement calls-this is good, but that's not; this is black, that's white; this is beautiful, that's obviously ugly. But if we can just look at what IS, often we begin to see the beauty in it. Weathered wood and rust may be signs of decay, but they're a watercolorist's challenge and delight, after all! Insects often make us shudder, but if we look at them closely and begin to study them, they may be quite beautiful. The mosaic-like patterns on a reptile's back are lovely, and a wonderful challenge, if you can get past the distaste or fear we often feel. (See my *Creating Textures in Watercolor* for examples of replicating these gorgeous patterns, or any field guide on reptiles for inspiration!)

The Navajo have a prayer... "In Beauty I walk. With Beauty before me, I walk. With Beauty all around me, I walk." To me, that has always meant something beyond living in a beautiful place, but having an *attitude* of beauty, of harmony. Acceptance and appreciation...

Art 20-1, Taking it slow and easy

Most people are not delighted to find Japanese beetles in their garden, and are quick to run for the insect spray...but they really are beautiful little scarab-like creatures, like living lacquer-boxes. Try to appreciate their color, texture, and gloss...take time to sketch or paint them. (I learned to get over a lifelong fear of spiders by drawing them and noticing their variety and beauty...)

This painting was originally done for Country Living Magazine.



Art 20-1



Art 20-2

Art 20-2, Take another look at trash...

Even a trash midden can touch us with something other than disgust - who left it? Why? Where are they now?

The shapes are interesting to draw as are the varied perspectives, and the juxtaposition of nature and man is poignant...it asks a question.

*This pen and ink drawing was done for my natural history book, *One Square Mile; An Artist's Journal of America's Heartland*, from Walker Publications-it is an old trash midden in my woods.*

Art 20-3, Log Cabin Shards

Of course, such picturesque subjects as this are always interesting to paint-the texture and color of rust, the complex patterns of light and dark formed by the fallen-in roof, the light-struck, tawny grasses against the sable shadow. A slow and careful drawing will let you catch the perspective, even in decay.

Layer colors as much as you need to, using warms and cools to get just the shade and texture you want...a burnt sienna and a variety of blues were the predominant hues here. With this medium, I drew in each layer dry, then wet it to get the texture and color I wanted.

This watercolor pencil painting appears in my North Light book, Watercolor Pencil Magic.

Check North Light Books online at <http://www.artistsnetwork.com/nlbooks/index.asp> for *Watercolor Pencil Magic* or go to <http://www.amazon.com> -just type in Cathy Johnson and you may find an out of print copy of *One Square Mile*, too!



You'll find my original artwork on new products in my Cafepress store, at http://www.cafepress.com/cathy_johnson.

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