

WEST HILLS ART LEAGUE

Minutes for Meeting of January 18, 2018

Ashley Robles Presiding

Minutes for our 11/16/17 meeting will be posted on our website.

Treasurer's Report - Audra Zampogna reported a current balance of \$4,706.21

Membership Dues – The group approved the suggestion that we reinstate the \$35 family dues rate in addition to the \$25 individual rate. The question was raised as to whether we could change the minimum age for membership (It's now 18), but Amy Short said that because we are a non-profit, we would have to revise our by-laws to allow it. Discussion on age was tabled for the moment.

Holiday Sale – Participants in the December Holiday Sale in the Robin Hill Carriage House were pleased with the response, and noted several sales.

Chamber of Commerce – Our ongoing exhibit at the Chamber offices in Moon offered us more space than originally anticipated, and several works have been sold. Ashley asked if participants wanted to change their pictures more often than annually. Amy Short said that the hanging rods only covered part of the wall space and that other walls required custom hooks and nail holes which would have to be changed each time new work was hung. She also pointed out that traffic on a day-to-day basis would not match the opening ceremony for the new offices. But others reminded us that there were events going on all through the year. In the end, Ashley said she would confer with the Chamber and return next month with recommendations, at which point the group could vote on a frequency of change.

Northland Public Library – We have an opportunity to exhibit again in March-April at the Northland Library, and with a raising of hands, the group indicated that they would like to take advantage of this. The Library will not handle sales but would allow exhibitors to post contact information next to their works. Kim Freithaler said that the North Hills Art Group has been permitted to post five or six signs among the pictures they've hung there. The signs give viewers a single phone number where they can get specific price and contact information about pictures in which they might be interested. Ashley said she would pin down details and get back to us. We could then reconfirm our interest at the next meeting.

Coraopolis Arts Council – Ashley met with the head of this group and suggested a number of ways in which WHAL could participate. She'll get back to us with details after the Council has had a chance to review her suggestions.

Demonstrator: Our guest presenter was Kim Freithaler, who showed us her technique for painting animal portraits in oil. Kim is originally from New York City and has a Bachelor of Fine Arts from St. John's University, where she completed an internship at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She has also studied at the Art Students League in Manhattan. She taught art in Manhattan public schools and currently teaches at the North Hills Art Center where she is the Executive Director. She is an award winning painter who exhibits her work in galleries, as well as local businesses. Her murals are installed in public buildings both here and in Georgia.

Kim chose as a subject her own family dog, an Australian Shepherd, adopted from the Animal Shelter. She started with a canvas approximately 20 X 40 inches in size on which she had already drawn a fairly detailed sketch of the dog.

Photos – She works from photographs of her subjects. She usually takes the photos herself and remarked that she is impressed with the sophistication of today’s smartphone cameras. (She says that when clients take the pictures, she is sometimes frustrated by the challenges they offer – e.g. pictures of black pets often come out flat with no texture, or elements of a wanted portrait are offered separately and Kim is expected to combine them.) She prints out her pictures on 8 ½ X 11 photo paper.

Support: Kim likes to buy pre-gessoed canvas in rolls, because of the flexibility it allows in choosing picture sizes. She prefers 10-to-12 oz. cotton canvas because of the texture it offers. She’s less inclined to use linen, because it is smoother than she wants.

Preliminary Drawing – As noted, Kim makes a fairly detailed drawing of her subject. She starts with charcoal, then paints over her chosen design using a diluted burnt umber paint (and then wipes away any unwanted charcoal lines.)

Paints – She likes a limited palette, and for this demonstration had only seven colors. (The selection did not include black, because she prefers to mix her own black, using blue and either burnt umber or Van Dyke Brown.) Currently, she prefers Lucas pigments, because they are more muted. Different colors vary in drying time, but if she is impatient, she will mix in a drying agent. (More often, when a painting becomes too wet to work on, she will let it dry for a day or two before continuing.) For her palette she uses freezer wrap from the grocery store.

Brushes – Kim uses flats and brights almost exclusively. For this demonstration she used inexpensive 2 inch brushes bought at the hardware store, and said that the rough bristle ends were often very good for painting fur. She said she would take this painting home and finish touch up and detail with smaller brushes. As to brands, she admitted she “has no loyalty.”

Backgrounds – She usually starts by quickly laying in a background for her paintings. She says she has come around to simplifying her backgrounds. Not only are they easier to paint but they are less distracting to the principal subject in a painting.

Painting the Subject - For the principal subject of her painting, she starts in with the darks and works out to the lights. For whites she uses a white pigment, but she said she has no compunctions about letting the unpainted canvas represent white areas. She tries to make her brush strokes mimic the direction of hair on the subject. Aided by the simple background and her broad flat brushes, she works quickly and was able to almost complete the picture in the one hour of her demonstration. She doesn’t repaint areas, because she fears overworking a piece.

Business – She usually asks for a month to do a pet portrait and prices her work based on size and complexity.

Our next meeting will be on February 15 when our demonstrator will be watercolorist Peggy Habits.

Respectfully submitted,

Will White



“Tiko” Oil painting by Kim Freithaler