**Scott L. Christensen**

Painting is not simply Scott Christensen’s passion; for him it’s a necessity, like breathing. Mind and body attune, he moves through the process of creating each landscape just as a river flows over rocks and around islands, all the while seeking a mellifluous whole. Obstacles of composition, color, and tone are transformed into opportunities with each stroke of his brush. Christensen’s goal is to compose an aggregate vision of nature’s beauty, while also delighting in the journey. “The process alone,” he says, “is worth the effort.”

After nearly three decades at the easel, Christensen is recognized around the globe, as evidenced by his invitation to show in Russia’s Ilya Repin St. Petersburg State Academic Institute for Painting, Sculpture, and Architecture. His energy flows through his work—paintings that in turn move us, opening our eyes to the beauty of places as varied as the California coast at twilight and the storied English countryside. They are luscious yet economical landscapes that beg to be explored.

In the absence of tradition, Winston Churchill said, “art is a flock of sheep without a shepherd. Without innovation, it’s a corpse.” Christensen’s work embodies both tradition and innovation. His singular vision is deeply informed by the Masters. He has studied Isaac Levitan, Alphonse Mucha, and Joaquin Sorolla, among others, as well as Anders Zorn, whose luminous work inspired Christensen to adopt a similarly limited palette. Equally present in Christensen’s work, though harder to detect, are the effects of literature, music, and football. His net is cast wide on account of his scholarly curiosity and uncommon past.

Born in 1962, Christensen grew up in Lander, Wyoming, a place of extreme geography and wild beauty. There his aesthetic developed. It was not until college, however, that he would recognize nature as his muse. The shift was precipitated by a personal catastrophe. While attending Chadron State College in Nebraska on a football scholarship he sustained a severe neck injury, leaving him unable to compete. Bereft, he sought solace in fly fishing and visiting his grandfather, a wheelchair-bound amateur oil painter. The scent of oils stirred Christensen’s imagination, so he took a leap into the unknown and enrolled in art classes. He eventually earned a degree in art education but chose to paint instead of teach. Now he does both.

Over the years he has pursued painting with the discipline he once brought to sports. The atypical combination of athleticism, scholarly curiosity, and an ardent desire to experience nature became the alchemy of his success. Although finished at the easel, most of his paintings begin as plein air studies. They end up in prestigious gallery and museum shows, such as the *Prix de West* at the National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, and in the permanent collection of Grand Teton National Park’s Craig Thomas Visitors’ Center.

Meditate on a Christensen landscape, just as he did the place that inspired it. If it resonates with you, then he has succeeded as a conduit of nature’s true expression. He hopes that you too will get outside and be uplifted by nature’s beauty, but in lieu of that, his paintings will more than suffice.

—Seonaid B. Campbell

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