Raised in a working-class Italian American neighborhood of Chicago, **Scott Burdick** is the oldest of four children.

“I was born in 1967 with severe clubbed feet that would have left me crippled my entire life had I been born a decade earlier. One of my earliest memories at Children’s Memorial Hospital is of my mother showing me how to transform simple shapes into planes, helicopters, fish, and all sorts of magical creatures. With my father’s help, I would conjure stories based on my primitive illustrations and bind them into little books with string. Drawing, reading, and writing became my escape into an imaginary world without limitations.

“At times, I felt isolated in my neighborhood, but seeing children in the hospital who would never walk—or even had only months left to live—showed me how fortunate I was. I invariably left the hospital feeling lucky and determined not to take my life for granted.

“Growing up, money was always an issue for our family of six. Each of us worked to contribute. I had a morning paper route that I shared with my sister. As a family, we collected recyclables, delivered phone books, and did just about any job that could help buy the essentials. Though I was good at math and science in high school, my dream was to become an artist, writer, or filmmaker. Realizing that my only chance of studying such strange pursuits was the long shot of winning a scholarship, I used the extra money from an after-school job at an Italian Ice and Beef stand in high school to attend life drawing classes at the American Academy of Art under the legendary teacher Bill Parks.

“Though I'd always loved drawing, it was Mr. Parks who filled me with the enthusiasm and discipline necessary to improve my skills. His love of painting and creative expression infected us all. Those extra drawing classes on Saturdays during high school—and full-time in the summers—is the only reason I won a full scholarship to the school.”

In the evenings, after a full day of drawing and painting at the academy, Burdick continued his study at the Palette and Chisel Art Club alongside a group of fellow American Academy students that included Nancy Guzik, Daniel Gerhartz, Rose Frantzen, Tim Lawson, Romel de la Torre, Clayton Beck, and many others. “We had the great fortune to paint alongside Richard Schmid at the open portrait sessions three times a week. Though not an official ‘teacher’ in a school sense, Richard was as much a mentor in regard to painting as to opening all our minds with discussions on philosophy, art, and what the purpose of art should be.”

The Palette and Chisel is where Burdick met his wife, painter Susan Lyon, who started at the American Academy of Art the year after he graduated. She joined the group at the Palette and Chisel and embraced its ethos of hard work. “It’s a wonderful thing being able to paint together all the time and grow as artists together,” says Burdick.

“One of the most profound turning points in my direction as an artist and a person was volunteering during spring breaks with my sister and a few other college students. We traveled to different places each year—to Mexico building an orphanage, to a refugee camp in Texas for people fleeing the violence during the Contra wars in El Salvador and Guatemala, and then living with a family on a Lakota reservation in South Dakota. These experiences put a face to events that had merely been in the background of my consciousness. It galvanized me to educate myself on the causes of such things. I realized the importance of taking action through my art, words, and deeds to share what I learned.”

Burdick’s numerous awards for painting include the 2021 Robert Lougheed Memorial Award, 2020 Donald Teague Memorial Award, and 2015 Jackie L. Coles Buyers’ Choice Award at the *Prix de West Invitational*; the 2007, 2002, and 2001 Artists’ Choice Award at the *Western Rendezvous of Art*; First Place at the Portrait Society of America’s 2010 *Annual International Portrait Competition*; and the 2003 and 1999 Artists’ Choice Awards at the *Laguna Plein Air Painting Invitational.* His work has been featured in such publications as *American Art*, *Art of the West*, *Art-Talk*, *Cowboys & Indians*, *International Artist*, *Plein-Air*, and *Southwest Art*.

In addition to painting, Burdick continues exploring his childhood interests in writing and filmmaking. He has completed three documentaries and three novels. Recently, a producer working for Netflix purchased an option on his second novel *The Immortality Contract,* to develop for a limited series.

Today, Burdick and Lyon live in a rural area of North Carolina as a home base between their travels and treks to places like Tibet, China, Africa, Nepal, Peru, Guatemala, India, Mexico, and throughout the United States and Europe. “I see painting as both a way of exploring the world and then as the vehicle of sharing those discoveries with others. I travel to find subjects to paint as much as to expand my horizons and understanding. More than anything, I’m conscious of the fact that selling paintings is secondary to contributing in a small way to making the world a better place.”

Scott Burdick is represented by Ballard’s Fine Art Gallery, Sheridan, Wyoming; Hindes Fine Art, San Antonio, Texas; InSight Gallery, Fredericksburg, Texas; Maxwell Alexander Gallery, Los Angeles, California; and Wilcox Gallery, Jackson, Wyoming.

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