

"Summer Shadows" Acrylic on Canvas—60 x 60 inches



FIGURING IT OUT

Dan Simoneau's Male Figurative Art

Let's start at the beginning...

Dan Simoneau was born and raised in Lewiston, Maine, the second largest city in the state. Lewiston is a small city with a highly respected private college nestled about halfway between the ocean and the mountains. The beauty surrounding him was inspiring. He began drawing at a very young age on any surface that was available. His uncle by marriage was a painter and saw Dan's potential. He encouraged Dan by buying him pads of drawing paper and pencils and encouraging him to draw the comics from the paper. A few years later his uncle started buying him Walter Foster art instruction books and art supplies for Christmas each year.

Dan remembers his school district had a city-wide Halloween poster contest each year. In third grade, he placed third in the city for his age group. He also had one of his still life drawings placed on exhibit in the city that year. At the age of 11, Dan began formal art classes. A new art supply and framing store had opened in town and was offering classes. Dan's parents signed him up and he was the youngest in a class of mainly adults. This is where Dan began drawing from life rather than from printed images. When the art instructor left, a new instructor took over the course. Dan was exposed to a different approach to art through this instructor. The first instructor was mainly a commercial artist and illustrator; the second instructor was a fine artist. Eventually the classes were cancelled but the instructor took Dan on for private lessons. Dan attended the lessons with a woman who eventually became his next art instructor.

"I get a contemporary Hopper feeling from Dan's work. The people look Introspective with a tint of melancholy. They look like they are engaged in emotional thought processes. I think that is why his work is so compelling."

- Cathy Carey

The start of painting...

At age 13, his parents bought him an oil painting set for Christmas. Dan switched from drawing in pencil and pen and ink and began painting on primed Masonite boards. His first painting, which his parents still have hanging in their home, was of a typical New England barn in the snow with a birch tree beside it. Footprints in the snow suggest the presence of humans who have recently passed through.

While he started with oils, Dan grew impatient with the drying time, often resorting to using blow driers or to placing his paintings on top of the steam radiators in his parent's home overnight to allow the heat to dry the paint. While buying paints at the hobby store one day, he saw tubes of Hyplar acrylic paint and bought some. This small event changed his approach to painting from that day onward. While acrylic paint was difficult to handle at first, he soon learned how to deal with the quick drying times and began painting acrylic on canvas and using acrylic like transparent watercolor on paper.

Dan continued painting and also at this time joined the Androscoggin Valley Art Association as its youngest member ever. He remained a member until graduation from high school. By the time Dan was a sophomore in high school he was exhibiting and selling his paintings in the summer Sidewalk Art Festivals in the area. In his senior year he won Best of Show in the junior division and received a purchase award in the adult division.

Expanding his horizons...

In 1980, Dan graduated from high school and began studies at the University of Southern Maine. He was the first person on both sides of his family to go to college. He began studying art education with the intention of teaching art at the high school level upon graduation. He soon switched to fine arts, majoring in painting, pottery and printmaking and minoring in art history. While in college, his more contemporary figurative compositions began to form and his approach to sculpting the figure with light and shadow (chiaroscuro) took shape. In Dan's advanced painting classes, his professor questioned his constant cropping off of heads in his figurative paintings. Dan's response was simple...

"I crop off the heads to allow the viewers to disconnect from the person in the painting and to allow them to see the figure as a sculptural form. Once a head is placed in a painting the viewer attempts to build a relationship with the person in the painting. I am attempting to prevent that relationship."

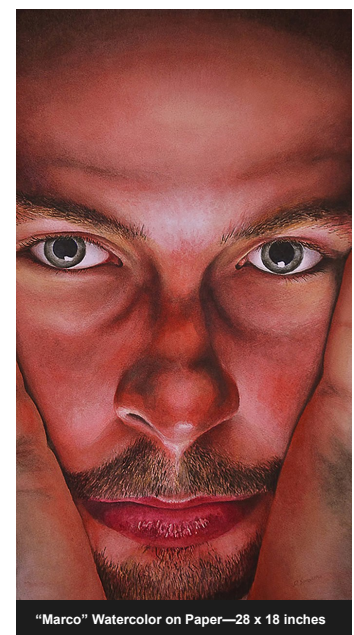
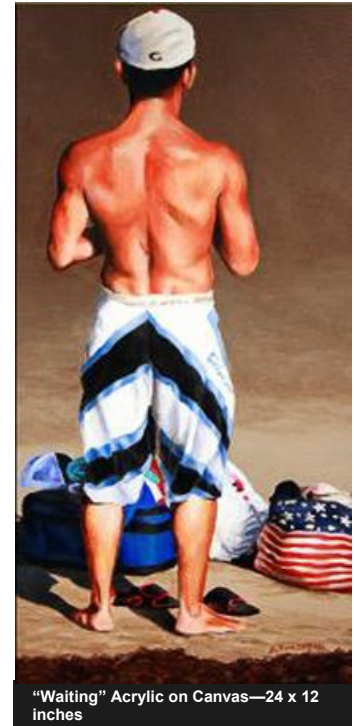
Another of Dan's professors has a profound influence on Dan's changing painting style. This professor taught watercolor and mentored Dan in advanced practices in independent study classes. Prior to these classes, Dan would paint every piece of detail in his paintings using fine brushes. There was one painting from his high school days where he painted every blade of grass in front of the old store using at least five shades of green to achieve a realistic effect. This professor loosened up Dan's style and showed him that the impression of realism could still be achieved without as much effort and by using larger brushes. To this day, Dan's realistic work is painted almost exclusively with brushes no smaller than 1/4 to 1/2 inch wide.

In college, Dan's work was influenced by artists such as Caravaggio, Chuck Close, Richard Estes and Philip Pearlstein. Of these artists, the influence of Caravaggio, Close and Pearlstein are still evident.

In college, oil painting was expected. Outside of coursework though, Dan painted in acrylic.

***Waiting* invokes Norman Rockwell's talent to capture an everyday scene, make time stand still, and transform it into a classic American moment.**

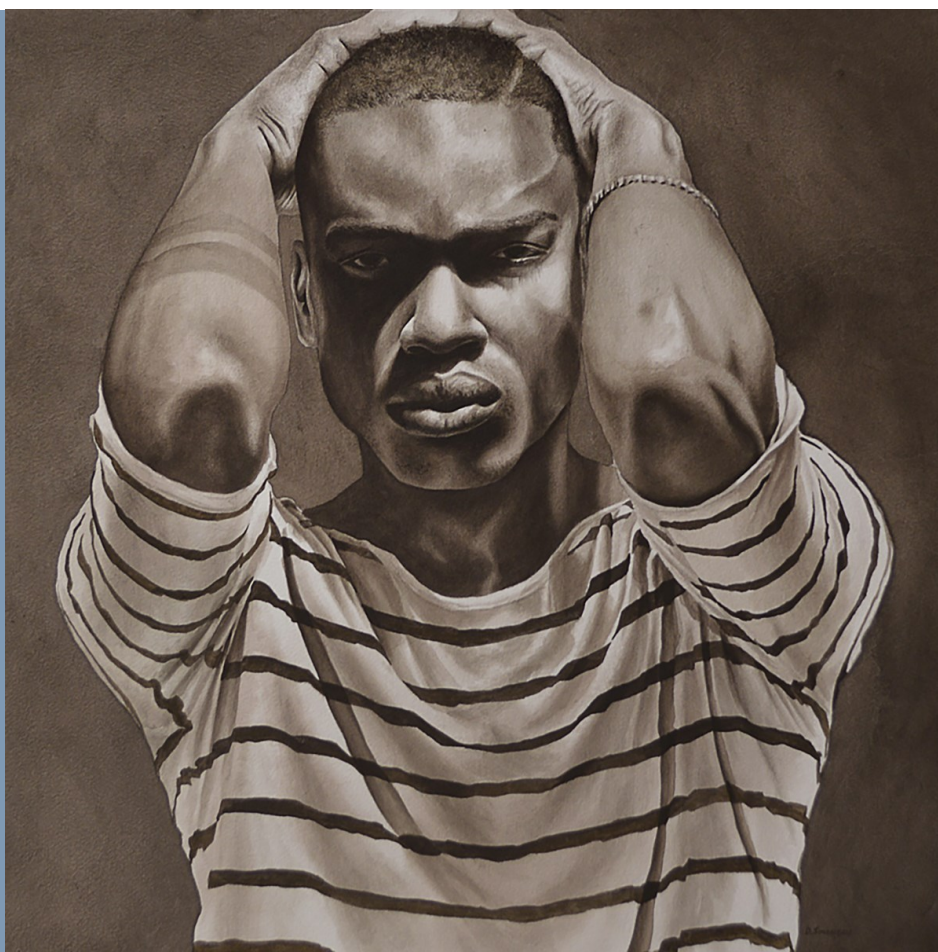
~Charly Swing, Founder—Infinity Art Gallery



Prince

As in most of Dan's paintings, this one began with a challenge. Dan wanted to limit his palette to a single color mixture — a true monochromatic painting.

He mixed a bowl of watercolor combining carbon black, sepia, venetian brown and burnt umber. At the end of each painting session the bowl was wrapped tightly to prevent evaporation. The values in the painting were achieved by saturating or diluting the mixture for application. This painting, as with all of Dan's watercolors, was completed by layering many thin transparent washes one on top of the other after each previous layer was completely dry.



"Prince" Transparent Watercolor on Paper—21 x 22 inches

Changing subjects...

Prior to and throughout college, Dan painted primarily Maine landscapes for exhibition and sale and limited his figurative work to the classroom. For over 30 years, Dan has painted the working boats along the Maine coast, primarily to record a fast disappearing way of life. When Dan moved to the Midwest in 1992 he continued painting these landscapes and they did quite well for him. The first year he moved to Toledo, OH he entered the Toledo Area Artist's Exhibition at the Toledo Museum of Art. Both paintings he entered were accepted into the show and one of the paintings won a third place judge's award and a purchase award. The painting is now in the permanent collection of the Toledo Federation of Art Societies and it was, for many years, housed at the Toledo Museum of Art. The other painting in the exhibition also sold.

At this time, Dan began overseeing the life drawing sessions at Spectrum Friends of Fine Art at the Toledo Botanical Gardens. Dan taught art in adult education and privately after college until he moved to Ohio. There he became a board member at Spectrum, becoming the education chair for the organization. This period of overseeing the figure drawing sessions led Dan to begin moving away from the Maine landscape and toward male figurative work. In college and in these sessions, Dan preferred hiring models who were dancers. Dancers understand their bodies, movement, and line. This combination made for models who could create beauty with their bodies. Dan would light the models to emphasize the musculature, beginning his journey to sculpting the figure with shadow and light in both his photography and his paintings.

Focus...

While overseeing life drawing sessions for Spectrum, Dan noticed a distinct difference between male and female models: the female models, while aesthetically pleasing, did not have the same sculptural qualities of the male figure. He was drawn to the play of light and shadow on the figure caused by the underlying musculature. With this discovery, Dan decided to focus his work on capturing the male figure on canvas and in watercolor.

Dan's paintings of the male figure have evolved. As mentioned previously, he was initially influenced by painters Caravaggio, Philip Pearlstein and Chuck Close. As the paintings matured the compositions became more than simply figure studies or portraits. Dan sought to capture the essence or soul of the model. Dan's newer work seeks to capture an inner peace, an internal struggle, or some other emotional connection to allow the viewers to get to know the model. This desire is quite a departure from his college work and his earlier desire to eliminate the emotional connection between the viewer and the subject.

Dan says another reason for his choice of male figurative work is to bring back an art form which has been neglected in recent decades. In classical art and through the ages, the male form was revered and a central theme. In recent times male figurative work has been labelled "gay art" and has, as a result, been avoided by many galleries. Through their art, Dan and several of his peers are hoping to bring a spotlight back to male figurative art in a purely artistic context similar to the way female figurative art is represented and displayed.

Accomplishments...

Since college, Dan's goal has been to share his knowledge of painting and composition with interested students. His ultimate goal is to teach workshops around the country. In order to accomplish this and to gain the credibility needed to be seen as a valid workshop instructor, Dan set out to earn status in the various disciplines he works in and to align himself with noteworthy organizations in the art world.

Dan has continued exhibiting his work nationally and internationally, winning many awards. His paintings have also been published in many national and international publications. He is currently a Signature Master in the International Society of Acrylic Painters and a Signature Member of the American Watercolor Society, the International Society of Experimental Artists, the National Society of Painters in Casein and Acrylic, and the National Watercolor Society. He is also a Fellow in the American Artist Professional League. He was the final President of the International Society of Acrylic Painters (disbanded December, 2020). He has also been recognized for his achievements by being listed in Marquis Who's Who in American Art since 2005 and was awarded their Lifetime Achievement Award in 2017. He is also identified as an Art Renewal Center Living Artist. The Art Renewal Center promotes traditional methods of realist painting worldwide.

In 2013, Dan was accepted as a non-resident artist member of the Salmagundi Club as both a painter and a photographer. In 2015 Dan was accepted as an artist member of the Copley Society of Art as both a painter and a photographer. The Salmagundi Club in New York City and the Copley Society in Boston are the two oldest art organizations in the country. In 2022, Dan became an Elected Member of the Allied Artists of America. Dan is also a life member of the Transparent Watercolor Society of America. He is also a member of the Portrait Society of America, the International Guild of Realism, and Poets and Artists.

Dan has also juried several competitions and enjoys the challenge of putting together a compelling, strong and diverse show each time he juries.



"Freedom lies in being bold"
Acrylic on Canvas—36 x 36 inches

"I was intrigued at who hangs pictures of nude men they don't know on their wall. BUT I would hang this!!! So answered my own question."

- Thyra Moore