

Biography: Willamarie Huelskamp

I was born into a large family in the green rolling hills of Kentucky. My childhood was not idyllic, but in the same way a seed cast into the manure pile has ample fertilizer to become a strong tree, I used my manure pile to become a strong artist. I feel blessed to have survived, and I have turned my unique ability\disability, to look out and see the world as if I were seeing everything, for the first time, into a fabulous vocation.

My family, all eleven of us, moved every few years with my dad's work. My education began in a Catholic grade school, imagine plaid pleated uniforms and nuns wearing black. More than once I was sent to the principles office for drawing caricatures of my teachers. School was a challenge, being dyslexic meant I learned how to read many years behind my classmates. I think I spent those intervening years drawing and daydreaming. During these early years I began a lifetime of competitive swimming.

I went to junior high in Alberta Canada. It was in Canada, living on a farm, where I developed my love of the outdoors, skiing, ice-skating, and horses. We had five Appaloosa horses on the farm and I spent a lot of time sitting on the fence near the barn drawing them. It is interesting how these early impressions of the landscape and animals have stayed with me and become the heart and essence of my artistic life.

The last two years of High School I lived in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Moving from school to school was hard, but it instilled in me a love of trying and experiencing new things. I am very grateful for a swimming scholarship to the University of Utah where I majored in, not art, but Civil Engineering. Math and I are good friends. I practiced as a structural engineer for a few years in Fairbanks Alaska. It was during this time that I met a group of professional artists and began meeting with them for a weekly figure drawing session on Saturdays. I purchased my first watercolors and began painting the delicate wildflowers and the stately mountains of Alaska.

The wild adventurer in me was not ready to be tied to the office and career of a structural engineer, and the taste I was getting of art-making made me restless. With a one-way ticket to London, a bicycle, tent, and few possessions, I left Alaska. My goal was to give myself the education of a true artist. I spent time in London, Belfast, Paris, Berlin, Amsterdam, Rome and Athens, seeing all the great works of Western Art History. In between the cities I rode my bicycle, made friends, picked up a few languages and filled many sketch books. Road weary, 5 years and 30+ countries later, I returned to Utah in 1987 to begin painting in earnest. In 1990 I added a BA degree in Fine Art from the University of Utah, and a husband onto my resume. Several more bicycle journeys across America and Canada were completed during these years. I also became very involved in the daily discipline of yoga, becoming both a yoga teacher and watercolor instructor 1996.

For the next half-dozen years I painted hundreds of Utah landscapes in watercolor on location. Becoming a mother led to more lifestyle changes as I traded in my vagabond outdoor painting lifestyle to become a studio artist. Today I paint in a beautiful modern loft style studio and teach annual watercolor workshops in locals around the world. Occasionally, I indulge myself with slow travel, making recent walking pilgrimages in Japan and in Spain.