

INTO THE HEART OF THE SOUTHWEST: 20 PAINTERS INTERPRET THE **FORBES TRINCHERA RANCH**

Forbes and *American Artist* again invited a group of artists to spend a week together interpreting a vast Colorado ranch in their choice of medium, subject, and style. | **by M. Stephen Doherty**

One way of gaining a better understanding of how artists interpret what they see is to ask several of them to respond to the same location in their own individual manners. That is, keep the subject matter constant, allow the artists to offer their own interpretations, and the variations will become obvious. This idea has been explored in five projects sponsored by *American Artist* and Forbes over the past 10 years. Each of the ventures brought together groups of artists from different regions of the United States to properties owned by Forbes, and the art-

work that resulted has been published in *American Artist* and exhibited in The Forbes Galleries, in New York City. The painting locations have included the Château de Balleroy, in Normandy, France; Old Battersea House, in London; and the 150,000-acre Trinchera Ranch, in Fort Garland, Colorado.

The most recent residency took place in Colorado from July 31 to August 8, 2006, and involved 20 artists, some of whom were selected through an open art competition, and others by invitation. The exhibition of their artwork, titled "Into the Heart of the Southwest:

20 Painters Interpret the Forbes Trinchera Ranch," will be on view at The Forbes Galleries from March 2 through May 5 (see sidebar page 28).

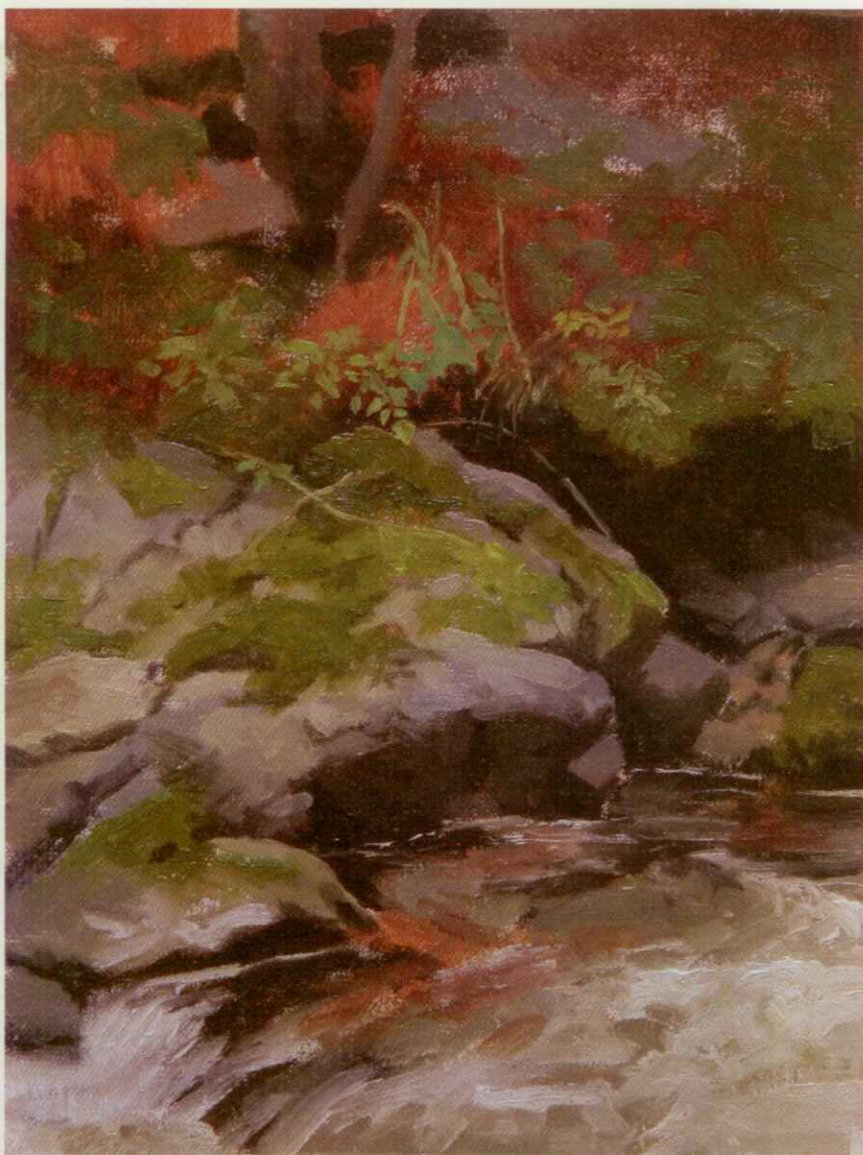
Although the artists were selected because their artwork indicated they would likely create work specific to the location, they were free to gather information in any way they felt appropriate; and they were given three months to spend in their home studios refining or enlarging their sketches, photographs, and paintings into works for the exhibition. As it turned out, most of the artists made an effort to draw and paint on location, when weather permitted. Even those accustomed to painting still lifes, figures, or urban scenes came prepared to paint the Trinchera Ranch as it appeared from the decks of ranch houses, along a rugged canyon road, or high up on mountain trails.

The artists familiar with painting the vast open spaces in the Western states didn't have to adjust to the painting conditions at the ranch; but those from New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, and Wisconsin—most of whom had never painted west of the Mississippi River—needed time to interpret the space that extended for hundreds of miles in all directions and to understand the weather patterns that could be observed hours before they affected the atmosphere at the ranch. Those artists also needed to acclimate themselves to the intense light, thin air, dry climate, and changing weather of the region.

"As someone who has lived my whole life on the East Coast, I was not

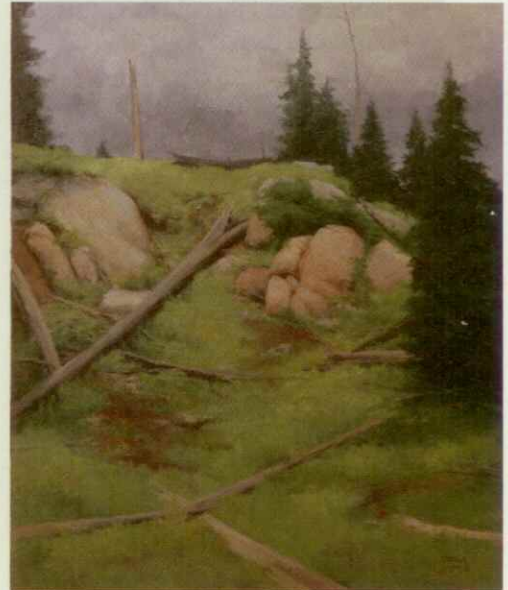
The painters at the Forbes Trinchera Ranch (left to right): Stephen C. Early, Sylvia Franco, John Varriano, Kim Lordier, Ira Goldberg, Stacey L. Peterson, Frank O'Cain, Ryan S. Brown, Anita Hampton, Aleksander Balos, Ruth L. Beeve, Brad Teare, Laura Ibbotson, Darren S. Kingsley, Deborah L. Chabrian, Edward Martinez, Peter Adams, Joseph Peller, Ellen Hutchinson, and Dean Hartung.





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There are many more paintings from the Forbes Trinchera Ranch residency on the American Artist website.



Ryan S. Brown received a B.F.A. from Brigham Young University, in Provo, Utah, and studied privately with William Whitaker before enrolling in The Florence Academy of Art, in Italy. In May 2004 he opened the Classical Drawing Academy, in Springfield, Utah. For more information on Brown, visit his website at www.ryansbrownart.com.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT

Forbes Canyon Rock Study

by Ryan S. Brown, 2006, oil, 8 x 6.
All artwork this article collection the artist unless otherwise indicated.

14,000 Feet Forbes Trinchera

by Ryan S. Brown, 2006, oil, 24 x 20.

Forbes Pond Study

by Ryan S. Brown, 2006, oil, 11 x 14.

sure I believed the way 19th-century artists painted the West. It seemed very unreal," says Maryland artist Ephraim Rubenstein. "Shortly before leaving for Colorado, I saw an exhibition at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, in New York City, that brought together some of the finest 19th-century paintings and drawings in their collection. The show featured the work of Frederic Edwin Church, Winslow Homer, and Thomas Moran, all of whom I greatly admire. I was immensely impressed with the pictures, but I thought the artists must have been exaggerating for



Aleksander Balos attempted to paint in the rain.

effect. The skies were too big, the clouds too dramatic, and the lighting too quirky and unnatural. After my encounter with the landscape that encompasses the Trinchera Ranch, I saw how true their observations had been: the spaces *are* vast, and the weather is so powerful and swift as to completely transform a landscape view in a matter of minutes. The fact that one could be up on a bluff and see several distinct weather patterns in the distance all at the same time really blew my mind.

"The relative unfamiliarity of the landscape was not the only factor affecting my painting," Rubenstein



John Varriano studied art privately as a teenager, but he majored in electrical engineering in college. In 1985 he began studying at the Art Students League of New York, in Manhattan, with Gustav Rehberger and Frank Mason. Over the past 10 years, his artwork has been included in exhibitions organized by a number of art organizations, including Allied Artists of America and Audubon Artists Inc., and he is represented by Mark Gruber Gallery, in New Paltz, New York. He teaches privately and in workshops, and he currently serves as president of the board of directors of the Art Students League of New York. For more information on Varriano, e-mail him at johnvarriano@yahoo.com.

TOP
Founders' Lodge Vista

by John Varriano, 2006, oil on paper, 9 x 12. Collection the artist.

ABOVE
Colorado Cottonwoods

by John Varriano, 2006, oil on paper, 12 x 18. Collection the artist.



LEFT

Mount Blanca

by Aleksander Balos,
2006, oil, 11 x 24.
Collection the artist.

BELOW LEFT

Forbes Pond

by Aleksander Balos,
2006, oil, 8 x 11.
Collection the artist.



Aleksander Balos moved to the United States from Poland in 1989 and graduated with a B.F.A. from Cardinal Stritch University, in Milwaukee, before studying art at the School of Representational Art, in Chicago. His paintings have been included in solo exhibitions at the Ann Nathan Gallery, in Chicago, and in group exhibitions in Florida, New York, Illinois, and Wisconsin. For more information on Balos, visit www.aleksanderbalos.com.

Trinchera Artists Featured Separately in *American Artist*:

Brad Teare studied at the University of Idaho, in Moscow, and Utah State University, in Logan, before pursuing a career as an illustrator. In 1994 he moved to Utah with his family and set up a printing studio, where he produces woodcut prints. His plein air paintings and prints have been exhibited in a number of important exhibitions at the Springville Art Museum, in Utah; Southam Gallery and Bingham Gallery, both in Salt Lake City; as well as Medicine Man Gallery in Tucson, Arizona, and Santa Fe.

Ruth L. Beeve studied art at the University of California, Berkeley; Ohlone College, in Fremont, California; Pacific Union College, in Angwin, California; and in numerous workshops with Dale Laitinen, Robert Reynolds, and Stephen Quiller. She is a signature member of the California Watercolor Association and exhibits her paintings in California with Valley Art Gallery, in Walnut Creek; Pacific Wildlife Galleries, in Lafayette; and Gallery Concord, in Concord. She maintains a studio in Concord, California. For more information on Beeve, visit www.valleyartgallery.org.

Kim Lordier graduated from the Academy of Art University, in San Francisco, and worked as a flight attendant before devoting herself to fine art full time in 2001. Her paintings have been included in exhibitions organized by the Pastel Society of America, the International Association of Pastel Societies, and the Carmel Art Festival; and she is a signature member of the Laguna Plein Air Painters and the Pastel Society of the West Coast. She is an artist-member of the California Art Club. For more information on Lordier, visit www.kimfanherlordier.com.

