

Neal Hughes

Illuminating land and sea in darkness and light

SO MANY artists come to paint at Burnham Boatyard in Essex, MA, that the owner will stage boats around the grounds for them to portray, says painter Neal Hughes, whose own depiction of the scenic boatyard garnered second place at Cape Ann Plein Air last year. His oil, titled *RED BOAT, ESSEX*, features a brightly painted boat anchored on wooden planks amid a frothy green sea of grass. For the Moorestown, NJ, artist, nautical subjects have been a recurrent motif from the start. “My family was very involved in sailing when I was a boy,” says Hughes, “and it was a natural source of inspiration for me when I started painting.”

Rustic farmhouses, cozy bungalows, vintage trucks and tractors, oyster houses, windjammers, and fishing boats have all pinched the limelight in Hughes’ landscapes and seascapes of his favorite locations, from rural New England to Maine’s rocky coast. A self-described impressionistic realist, Hughes arranges his value patterns, colors, and overall design with a discerning eye. “I like my work to

have visual impact that really pops and a composition that’s really working,” he notes. The veteran draftsman studied fine art at the Philadelphia College of Art and worked as an illustrator in the 1980s and ’90s. Nearly all his works were paintings, adds Hughes, who churned out portraits and other illustrations for book and magazine covers, newspapers, advertisers, and children’s books, such as the Marvin Redpost series by Louis Sachar.

Today the prolific artist manages an equally busy schedule as an award-winning painter, participating in national juried exhibitions with prestigious groups like the Oil Painters of America, the American Impressionist Society, and the American Society of Marine Artists. He also travels to plein-air competitions around the country, where it’s not uncommon to find him painting during the day and at night to convey the shifting moods of light, both natural and manmade. In his nocturne *SAN ANGELO NIGHTS*, for example, a solitary brick building glows warmly in a streetlamp’s floodlight. “The

subject is really the light and the mood it creates,” says Hughes. “It’s a totally different feeling when you’re painting in the middle of the night. There might be one light source illuminating something you’d pass by during the day and not look at twice.” —Kim Agricola

representation

Camilla Richman Fine Arts, Osterville, MA; **Chadds Ford Gallery**, Chadds Ford, PA; **Chestnut Hill Gallery**, Philadelphia, PA; **Hughes Gallery**, Boca Grande, FL; **J. Russell Jinishian Gallery**, Fairfield, CT; **Maritime Gallery at Mystic Seaport**, Mystic, CT; **Susan Powell Fine Art**, Madison, CT; and **Sylvan Gallery**, Wiscasset, ME.

upcoming shows

Modern Marine Masters, Maritime Gallery at Mystic Seaport, through June 18.
Plein Air Easton, Easton, MD, July 17-23.
Art of Rowing, Maritime Gallery at Mystic Seaport, July 29-September 17.



▲ *Kuerner Farm, Evening*, oil, 24 x 30.

◀ *Red Boat, Essex*, oil, 14 x 18.