

Marc Chatov

Critique Session - Spring 2008

Reviewed by Jean Scanlin Wright

It was difficult to find an available seat on Tuesday, April 29, for the popular critique session offered by the PSA at the North DeKalb Cultural Center. Unbelievably, for the mere cost of bringing an hors d'oeuvre to share, each participant received the benefit of having his work critiqued by one of the country's top portrait artists. This critique was lead by PSA's Advisory Board member Marc Chatov, a gifted artist and a highly respected art teacher. One of Mr. Chatov's many accomplishments has been his selection by *Money Magazine* as one of the top eight portrait artists in the nation.

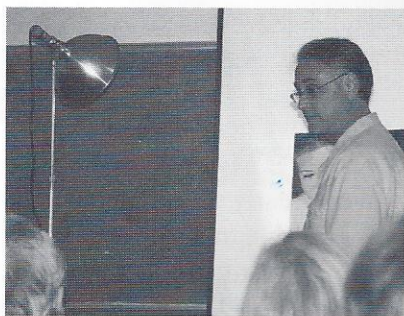


Photo by Ann Marshall Bailey

Artists may seek critique to resolve a problem or to receive confirmation from an expert that the work is complete, needing no more adjustments or corrections. The latter seems to rarely happen, much like winning the lottery. But, being a participant or an observer at these sessions is, in a way, "winning the lottery." Everyone learns from each other in ways too numer-

ous to count. In the past two years of attending PSA critiques, I noticed that, for the first time, entry works were preliminarily propped against the wall of the room "incognito," with their images facing the wall. This was an effective way of keeping the focus totally on the piece of art being presented, and was the first idea among many that I learned that evening.

Each of the twelve works brought to the critique had its own strengths, and its own areas for improvement. From realistically capturing an ocean's wave to keeping a subject's eyes from appearing too wide, Chatov expertly explained ways to resolve those problems and many others. He suggested, "When painting waves, study the anatomy of a wave. Spend time analyzing the horizon. The intensity of color lowers as you go back to the horizon. Take a photo of a wave and practice painting it as it appears in the photo to learn its anatomy." When the subject of a portrait appears to have the eyes opened too widely, Chatov suggests joining or massing the top part of the pupil to the eyelid, exaggerating the shadow from the lashes and softening it.

Also, he said, study all objects and aspects of the forms in your paintings. Chatov added, "You can fudge things some of the time but you can't fudge all the time. Sooner or later, you're going to have to know something

about the things you're painting. It's not just painting the face."

Often, when the background of a painting is an outdoor scene, the artist will include large trunks of trees that go off the top edge of the canvas. Because this large area simply stops, it can appear as though the trunk has been "amputated." This stark appearance can be corrected by adding a limb of leaves in front of the tree trunk.

Another aspect of painting that all artists have to address at some point is the individualizing of their color palette. Chatov advises artists to purchase the largest set of *Crayola* crayons available. He urged, "Pull out your favorite colors. Set them aside and you will discover that those colors are who you are. Every artist has his colors. There comes a time when you have to discover the colors that excite you. Brick red or magenta, sap green or aqua - each artist will have a set that he prefers. Know what yours are."

All who attended this critique led by Marc Chatov undoubtedly left knowing more than when they arrived, and I advise you all to be a participant in the next PSA critique offered. Bring your latest work, an hors d'oeuvre for all to enjoy, and a notepad to jot down the many suggestions given . . . It'll help you solve problems that you may encounter during your journey as an artist. ■