

Fishermen
Joanne Sibley

Discover...
**Figurative
Art**



Image: Joanne Sibley, 2005, from the collection of the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands

“Apart from my being emotionally driven to paint, the wonderful exhilaration and intensity of working on-site is simply an out of world experience for me. Nothing can compare to the joy of it all. ”

Joanne Sibley

The Artist

Joanne Sibley has lived in the Caribbean for over 60 years, but she was in fact born in Winnipeg, Canada. There, her father, Newton Brett, was a commercial artist who painted portraits and landscapes by request in his spare time. Her father's work influenced Sibley very much while she was young and she first began drawing and painting during lessons with him.

Sibley earned her degree in interior design at the University of Manitoba in Canada. She also met her future husband, Jeremy, there and moved to Jamaica with him in 1954. In Jamaica Sibley worked as an artist with Art and Publicity, an advertising agency that eventually became a part of the international advertising company McCann Erickson.

During her time in Jamaica she was also given the honour of being asked to paint a portrait of Jamaican National Hero George William Gordon. This portrait was so popular that she was asked (or commissioned) to paint portraits of a few founding members of some of Jamaica's top companies—it was these portrait commissions that began her career as a serious artist.

With years of experience under her belt Sibley and her husband moved to the Cayman Islands in 1980, where her body of work grew quickly. Joining the Visual Arts Society in Cayman allowed her to exhibit and teach workshops regularly.

Sibley finds inspiration in other artists such as Jamaican Barrington Watson, as well as other figurative and portrait artists like John Singer Sargent and Joaquín Sorolla. She primarily uses watercolour and oils and works outdoors (or what is sometimes called *en plein air*) amongst the landscapes and scenes of life in the islands she lives in, finishing the details in her studio.

Sibley's paintings have gained many devoted collectors around the world, and her accomplishments have been recognised by being awarded various regional and international awards and exhibitions. Of her approach to painting she says, "I think that whatever you are painting you need to be emotionally involved and have a strong attraction to the subject in order for the painting to be successful".

Her work has been added to the Cayman Islands National Collection and many other private and corporate collections. Sibley's paintings have been featured in Cayman Islands stamps, and a set of wine bottle labels for Grand Old House restaurant.

The Artwork

The painting featured on the front, *Fishermen*, is a 20" x 26" watercolour. Sibley paints in a style called 'figurative art' — this is artwork that strongly reflects the real world.

Many artists throughout history have produced figurative art. For example, Gustave Courbet's work as a Realist in the mid-1800s aimed to show 'real life' and featured subjects previously considered unworthy in fine art, such as portraits of workers and not shying away from perhaps more unpleasant topics.

Fishermen as a naturalist figurative work depicts an everyday scene that many who live on Grand Cayman will find familiar. Sibley describes her intentions in creating the artwork as wanting to capture the beauty of the day, including the characters of the men cleaning their catch and the excitement of the anticipated purchase.



For more information about learning opportunities at the National Gallery of the Cayman Islands go to:
www.nationalgallery.org.ky

Discussion

- Do you recognise this scene? Which elements of the painting make it feel like it is somewhere in Cayman?
- Joanne finds painting outside to be joyful. What do you think the pros and cons of working '*en plein air*' are?
- Many artists who work outside also take a photograph of the scene. Why do you think this is?

Making Comparisons

- Look at the paintings of Barrington Watson—can you see his influence in Joanne Sibley's work? Do you prefer Watson or Sibley's style? <http://www.wikipaintings.org/en/barrington-watson>.
- Visit the Pure Art gallery on South Church Street in Cayman to view Debbie van der Bol's work. Debbie was influenced by Joanne and now sells work by many different artists in Cayman.
- Joanne Sibley was influenced by the art of John Singer Sargent (January 12, 1856 – April 14, 1925), the most successful portrait painter of his era, as well as a gifted landscape painter and watercolourist. View his work here: www.johnsingersargent.org. Do you have a favourite piece?

Follow Up Activities

- Try doing a quick sketch outside. Then use watercolours to add colour. Don't worry about getting details or being precise— but aim to give an impression of what you see.



'Christmas Time on North Church Street' - a watercolour painting used on a postage stamp.

- Design your own Cayman postage stamp. What image or scene would you choose?
- Choose one detail of *Fishermen* and try to recreate this—it could be a person, the dogs or a boat on the water. Try to match the colour, light and shadowing seen in Sibley's



Photograph of Joanne Sibley: courtesy of the artist herself

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