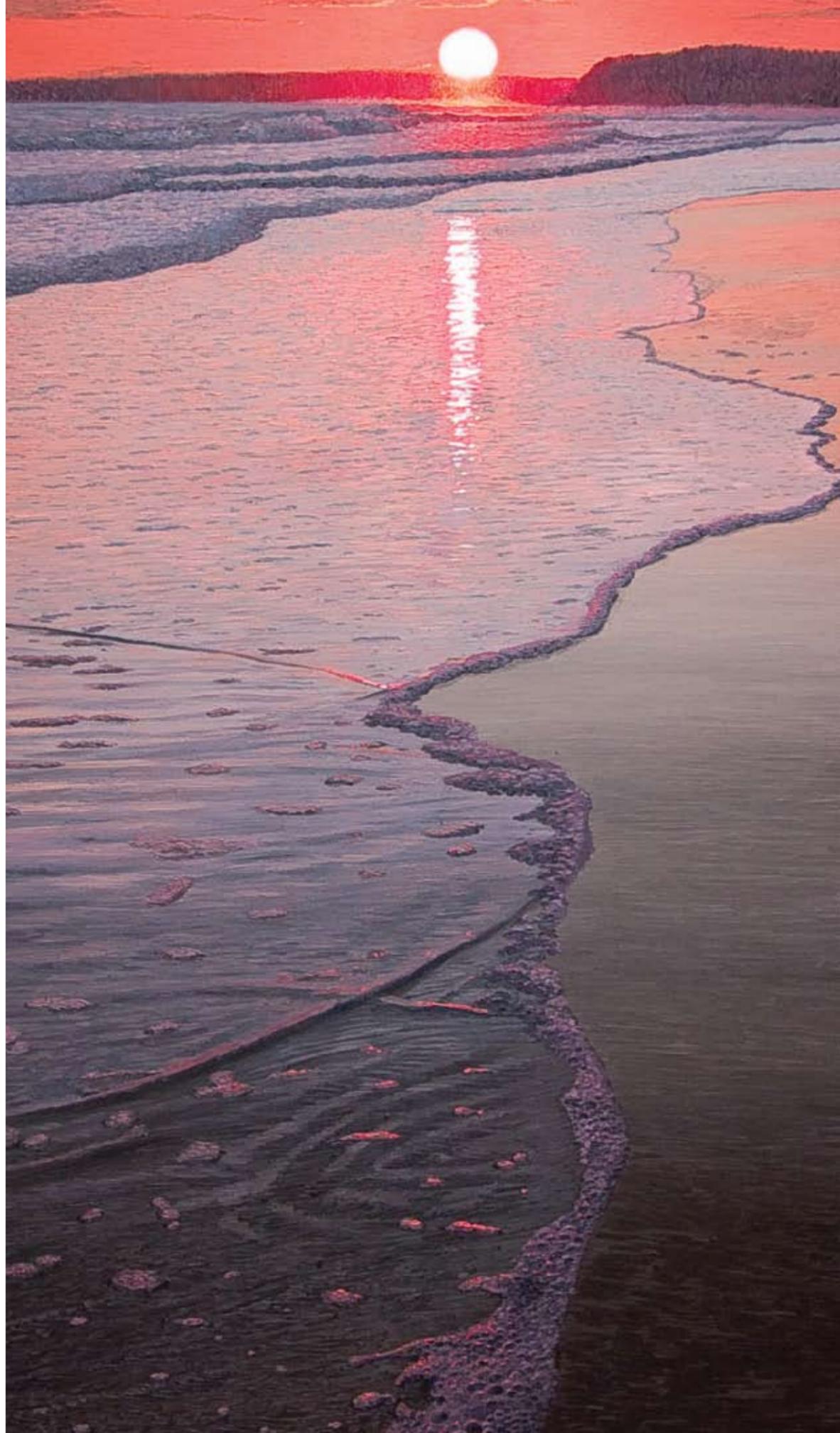


# Artist to Collect Joe Sampson



## Water *the natural element*

written by Debra Usher

Joe Sampson has always loved water. When you step in front of one of his realistic and beautiful paintings, you can hear the movement of the waves.

Joe's early childhood in Malta was spent visiting the shorelines around the island with his family. This is where his love for water began.

"Endless summers at the beach are ingrained in my mind forever, keeping me captivated since," Joe recalls.

His studio is a separate building from his house, a refuge where he works and relaxes. Everything is done in this space, from conceptualizing to planning and painting.

"I love to listen to music and lose myself in a painting for the better part of a day," he says.

Being born on an island, fishing and travelling are three major influences in his work. He believes that he is drawn to water because it is a natural element, part of everyone's body.

"It's as natural as simply wanting to go outside to enjoy nature, or being mesmerized by an evening campfire," he explains. "I feel at peace at the water's edge."

His inspirations come from many different locations around the world, from the Canadian East Coast to the tropics. He explores different beaches and shorelines and this keeps him constantly inspired.

### **Beach relics inspirational**

"Sometimes I collect different things I find from different shorelines I have visited. On my last trip when I visited Nova Scotia I found the skull of a beach bird that was perfectly intact. It had a very unique aquatic bird-like look. I don't know



why but I kept it and reminds of the time I spent exploring the shorelines there. If I collected pebbles and driftwood from every shore I have visited I would have to have a separate building to store them all."

Back in his studio, he draws upon his reference photos; the images taking him back to the beach or shore.

Joe says he's always been impressed by aggressive yet accurate painting. He particularly likes the creation of a life-like image -- something that appears real until the viewer nears the canvas to reveal the intricate brush strokes.

"Creating this illusion, I believe, is one of

the most challenging things to accomplish in art. While studying at the Ontario College of Art, I remember viewing the art of many different artists but the ones that really made an impression on me at this time were the realist painters, painters who were able to make viewers of their work feel as though they were looking at something alive."

Artists who left an early impression on him were Chuck Close and Ron Bolt. Other genres continue to influence his work the more he paints. He mentions The Group of Seven's impressionistic landscapes and Lucien Freud's raw and aggressive style as leaving lasting impressions.





"I have always been very impressed by the ability of an artist to capture life accurately with aggressive, loose style," he notes.

#### **Water is his great obsession**

Joe describes his love of water as an obsession, which extends to fishing. "Many of my ideas have come after spending a day and sometimes an evening, on the water. There is nothing like being in a boat for the day and seeing how the water changes during the course of a day."

Few artists, he admits, specialize in painting water. He tries to paint it the way it looks, as if the viewer is standing right in front of it.

"This is truly a challenge," he says.

Joe works with oil on canvas, starting with a base coat and then a detailed drawing.

"Then I normally work from dark to light. Not every painting is the same, different subjects require different techniques. Some of the techniques I use are wet-on-wet and dry brush."

He prefers to paint the things that move and inspire him. "This way I'm not painting someone else's vision and I believe this shows in my work."

When he spends days on the water he gets to see all the subtle changes that occur

throughout the day.

"I photograph these in order to try to capture that moment in time. My goal then is to translate these moments from my memories and photos into paintings. Sometimes this is easier said than done, because of what I choose to paint. Water is a difficult animal to capture and hold forever in a painting."

This challenging subject matter tests him, but also keeps him interested and inspired.

"I love everything I do about my work from the collecting of reference to creation of the work."

#### **Brief diversion into illustration**

Joe has explored many different mediums, beginning with pencil, pen and ink. He then moved to watercolour and acrylics, finally discovering oils in college, which became his favourite.

"I like oils, because of their forgiveness they are truly amazing to work with," he beams.

After college, he did some editorial and advertising illustration but the market was very competitive to begin with. Then, with the introduction of the computer and easy access to stock illustration, surviving as an

illustrator became too difficult, he noted. He moved away from illustration and found himself working at job he didn't much care for. A friend from college who was painting regularly and participating in exhibitions inspired him to get back into painting.

"This was the encouragement I needed to get back to my true calling -- creating art -- and the rest is history."

For fledgling artists, Joe urges them to paint what they like, however they wish to paint it. Style, medium and technique will all develop in time.

"And a very important thing is to get involved in showing your work by participating in different shows and art-related events."

#### **Loves the cottage life**

When not painting in his studio, he can be found going to cottages on different lakes and taking pictures, or travelling with his family. Both he and his wife really enjoy visiting different countries and beaches around the world. He looks forward to loading his truck with gear in anticipation of going to a cottage for the weekend.

"Sometimes when I arrive at the cottage we are visiting I find myself hyperventilating because I'm so excited to get out on the water," Joe

says. "I truly reconnect with my childhood when I am out enjoying nature. If we are not going to enjoy a cottage over the weekend I really enjoy barbecuing and swimming at home. Sometimes the simplest of pleasures are the most satisfying and enjoyable."

This nature lover will seldom be found in a shopping mall.

Joe enjoys entertaining at home and his favourite dish is rabbit in red wine served over fresh pasta, a traditional Maltese dish. He enjoys many different wines, with a nice Amaranone being his favourite. Recently, he's started to enjoy a variety of Malbecs.

One of his favourite restaurants in Ontario is Girasole in Port Credit. It is a quaint romantic restaurant featuring Mediterranean-style cuisine. The dishes are exquisite with an ambiance to match.

"I also love going to my parents for dinner as both my parents are gourmets who have spoiled me with wonderful cooking from an early age."

Joe's love of the water not only fills him with eternal joy, but shimmers on his canvasses, taking us all on a journey, back to the shores.

For more information on Joe's art, visit [www.sampsonstudio.com](http://www.sampsonstudio.com) or call 416.878.3327.

