



SOCIETY OF ACTUARIES

Article from:

The Actuary Magazine

June/July 2012 – Volume 9 Issue 3

ACTUARIES ON THEIR OWN TIME

It's amazing what one can do with color, a paint brush and a blank canvas. Meet four actuaries who have an artistic flair.



Erythrophobia, the fear of red—by Jeffrey A. Leitz, FSA, CERA, chief executive officer, Walbridge Capital Advisors LLC. He can be contacted at jleitz@walbridgecapital.com.

JEFFREY A. LEITZ has been creating artwork for 45 years. His grandparents enrolled him in private art lessons at age 5, after he won several coloring contests. “Creating fine art balances and enhances the analytical aspect of my quantitative thinking,” Leitz said.

“I have strived to master many styles, including Dutch masters, Impressionism, Abstract Expressionism and Stream of Consciousness Graffiti.” When asked if there is an actuarial tie-in to creating artwork, Leitz had this to say, “Yes, many works relate to my quanti-

tative alternative investment strategies. For example, ‘Erythrophobia, the fear of Red’ is a metaphor for avoiding financial loss by protecting capital from market shocks and is inscribed with formula graffiti relating to my hedge fund.” ■



Skystory—by Anna Rappaport, FSA, MAAA, consulting actuary, Anna Rappaport Consulting. She can be contacted at anna@annarappaport.com.

ANNA RAPPAPORT started taking art lessons when she was about 8 years old. “My parents encouraged me and arranged for me to go to art lessons in Baton Rouge, La., where we lived. I took the bus downtown to go to lessons, one of my few types of journeys to town. I also remember making craft projects with my mother. One I particularly remember was building houses from shoe boxes and scrap materials such as thread spools. This was at a time when kids went to few special activities and this activity made a big impression on me,” Rappaport said of her artistic beginnings.

When asked what she likes best about creating art, Rappaport said, “Making art enables

me to do my ‘own thing,’ be creative and move into a different space. I really enjoy thinking about different ideas and trying to get them on paper.”

Rappaport described her art this way, “Someone once asked me if, ‘I color inside the lines or outside of the lines.’ My response was that I make my own lines. I have a number of different series and each is unique. Many are abstract collages building in pieces of paper, pieces of my own photos, ink splatter, rubber stamps and more. I love doing mixed media. I am very interested in textures, movement and colors. I have also done flowers and nature drawings, but

generally they are my own interpretation rather than trying to make a reproduction of what is there. I try to capture the feeling of the place.”

“I believe there is a tie-in, in the way I think about and approach both,” Rappaport said when asked if there is an actuarial tie-in to creating artwork. “In both, I like to define my own space, pull together and synthesize different ideas (and materials) and create a new whole. I think art has helped my actuarial work. I do not work ‘sequentially’ in either,” she added. **A**

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View from Armenzano—by Debi Gero, FSA, MAAA, senior vice president, chief risk officer, Sunamerica. She can be contacted at artist@debigerocom.

DEBI GERO started creating artwork as an adult. “I started art classes in 1997, so it will be 15 years this fall,” she said. “I would pass an art school, Brentwood Art Center, every day on my way to and from work. One day they had a sign in the window advertising the upcoming annual student art show, so I attended the show. I was blown away by the quality of art created by the students. I wistfully thought ‘maybe someday I can go to a school like this.’ On the way out I stopped at the front counter to look at their brochure and asked the woman at the desk what one had to do to qualify to take classes. ‘Sign up.’ Within two weeks I started the Thursday night beginning drawing class.”

Gero can’t narrow down what she likes best about creating art. “The journey from a beginning student to a professional artist has been special at every step. The support from friends and family, the challenge of learning something new, the friendships formed, the wonder of discovery, the hope that comes with the new art gadget just purchased that it will make everything better, and of course, pretty much every minute spent in the creative process have made the journey so special. And the thrill of knowing that the journey is far from over.”

Gero described her art as, “various forms of representational.” “But I like to focus on

things that have strong sense of light, and often lighthearted,” she added.

Gero described the actuarial tie-in to creating artwork like this, “In a class when we are told to divide our page into fourths, for example, I can do the math. I would describe some of my work as having more of a business tie-in than an actuarial tie-in per se. For example, I created a series of mixed media pieces during the financial crisis that combined cardboard from boxes found outside a grocery store (instead of a canvas), pages from *The Wall Street Journal*, and acrylic paint.” **A**



Carnation—by Joyce Zhang, FSA, actuarial associate, Towers Watson. She can be contacted at yzhang2@alumni.sfu.ca.

JOYCE ZHANG will tell you when asked how she got started making art, “I like and enjoy painting very much and have been painting in my spare time since I was very young. I elected a painting course in elementary school and started my artwork there. However, due to other higher priority things, I didn’t continue painting courses past elementary school. I am only an amateur, however, not a professional painter.”

“My creativity and imagination are not bounded when I paint,” Zhang said when

asked what she likes best about creating art. “Painting helps me release my pressure, helps me relax and painting with brighter colors reminds me there’s always a light at the end of the tunnel. I get self-motivated through painting and I am really happy each time I create and complete a new piece of art.”

Zhang doesn’t think she’s developed her own painting style yet. “But, I like to paint nature scenes, such as plants, landscapes, etc. A lot of times, I paint based on pictures.”

Is there an actuarial tie-in to creating artwork? Zhang had this to say, “I think creative thinking, being able to see the whole picture and also paying attention to details are a couple types of actuarial tie-ins to creating artwork.” **A**