



HOWELL GALLERY

## WES NEWTON

Early in life Wes A. Newton was identified as the artist among his family and peers. Newton started drawing when inspired by watching his dad sketch and paint. A paper pad would often become his playground. Even in school he might draw things in the extra space on his paperwork. His teachers couldn't help but notice his ability and encouraged him to pursue it.

In 1985 Newton received his Bachelor's Degree in Art from the University of Science and Art of Oklahoma. He attended U.S.A.O. on a scholarship that he received as a reward in an art competition for high school students. While attending college he won numerous awards from around his home state of Oklahoma as well as regional. He was awarded a special scholarship to attend the Art Students' League in New York in the fall of 1985, where he studied under David Leffel and Dick Goetz.

After painting a year Wes followed his father and became a firefighter for Oklahoma City in 1986. Newton states, "I could see how difficult it was going to be making it as an artist starting out. The fire department was the perfect solution at the time. It had all the qualities one would desire in a promising career and a favorable schedule for having a second job." Even though the job has been rewarding Newton has often struggled yearning to be an artist full time. It wasn't long before he met the woman of his dreams and wedding bells rang. A few years later Wes and Dawna started a family. Newton explained, "Once I was blessed with a family the decision became too difficult to move into full time art. I didn't want my family to have to sacrifice for something that had no guarantees, and before I knew it I realized I had invested enough time into the department that a retirement seemed too important to put aside. I was in it for the long haul."

Newton has had quite a ride in the fire service. Early on tragedy struck when he helped pull his captain and two other firefighters out of the flames of a house fire that claimed their lives. Then in 1995 he was recovering those that lost their lives in the Oklahoma City bombing. And not long after that searching through the destruction of the nation's largest and most destructive tornado. Newton has been asked why he doesn't paint the experience of being a firefighter, in which he says, "I love the mountains and wildlife too much. That is what I enjoy. That's the experience I want to paint. The fire department is a living but art is my life."



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In May of 2012 Newton took a big step towards his dream. He retired from the fire department. He says he regrets putting off his dream. With that obstacle gone he can spend his time in the studio. "I can see my development growing already. The momentum isn't interrupted and I'm not missing some of the events I did earlier." He says his biggest problem now is that he's producing more paintings than he can possibly frame.

Newton made it to the top 200 of the Arts for the Parks national exhibition in 1991, 1996, and 2001 and was selected for the top 100 in 1998 and 2003. He has participated in the American Art in Miniature exhibitions at the Gilcrease Museum in Tulsa, OK in the 1998-2008 exhibitions. He has also participated in the "Western Visions Miniature Show" at the National Museum of Wildlife Art in Jackson, Wyoming in the 2000 and 2001 exhibitions. In 2005 he was invited to three of the Rocky Mountain Plein Air Painters shows - "This was one of my favorite events. I not only enjoyed painting several plein air paintings but met several other artist and patrons." In 2007 Newton was excepted and became a member of the Rocky Mountain Plein Air Painters.

Newton has painted with nationally known artists Wayne Wolfe, Jim Wilcox, and Scott Christensen. He says to interact with other artists is important. "Each artist that I have spent time with has shared knowledge that is invaluable to my growth as an artist. In many of my paintings I see a little influence of each," He states that he has also learned a lot from the exhibits that show in the Cowboy Hall of Fame and Gilcrease Museum, both an easy drive from where he lives. "Most people enjoy paintings for their subject and beauty. I enjoy stepping right up to a painting to see the process of the artist. I want to know how they achieved what they did. To an artist the execution and process of a painting is as important as the final product. "

With his wife, son and daughter Newton resides in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He frequently takes trips to the northwest to paint on location and to gather reference material. He says, "It is very important to observe the colors and values that nature provides. The studies on location furnish that in the studio."