

Carol Thompson



## "Seeing The Sea"

The first time I saw the ocean, I ran into it up to my knees and tasted it to see if it was really salty! It was! It is! I knew then that this constantly moving, ever changing, always and forever, subject would be my choice to portray in oils on canvas.



I had always dreamed of going West to see the ocean. As a child in Wisconsin I would watch the clouds gather from the western horizon and wonder if they had come from the seacoast. In the mid 60's my husband and I drove from our home in Las Vegas, Nevada to visit his parents in Seattle. It was on our way through Oregon that I saw the ocean for the first time. I was impressed! It kept "rolling in" but never inundated the shore! I started to study the phenomenon that was the sea. Long before I started to paint with oil, I was mentally painting the waves, rocks, shore and headlands in my mind. I knew I had to live closer to the sea. The opportunity came when my husband accepted a position in Olympia, Washington at the southern most tip of Puget Sound just 60 miles from the beach.

When my children started school, I took my first lessons in oil painting. The workshop was a seascape done with a palette knife. I was hooked! I was now able to put down on canvas those beautiful scenes that had captivated me: The early morning fog bank slowly lifting on the horizon: The



gray sky turning blue and the surface colors of the water changing with it: The rolling breakers, the splashing waves upon the rocks, the misty headlands. I never got tired of the Mistress. Sometimes a shaft of sunlight would break through gathering storm clouds and illuminate a rising swell, sending diamonds cascading down the face of a translucency. I painted it. Sometimes winter winds whipped flying froth onto beach and rocks as seagulls scurried for shelter. I painted it. Some days saw the sun setting surrounded by gloriously glowing colors. I painted it. Often the sky was blue, the water

green, the ocean calm and serene under cloudless skies. I painted it that way, too!

In succeeding years I attended workshops in Washington and Oregon with noted seascape artists. I came to realize that the ocean was so immense and so intense a subject, that I needed to slow it down, break it into bite-sized pieces, as-it-were. Since time at the seashore was limited, and the light constantly changing, I did my quick sketches en plein air ( "on location" it was referred to then) to paint later in my studio. I also supplemented my studies of the water with slides and movie film. By running the 8mm film backward, I gained an added insight into the anatomy of a wave. With 7x binoculars, I focused on one wave at a time; one rock with water cascading down amongst the cracks and crevices. I would spend hours just watching the foam patterns slip up the face of a roller. The exact moment a wave breaks was another complete study. I watched clouds cast shadows on the surface of the sea, the colors changing dramatically, as the clouds dissipated and the sky turned blue.



When technology brought us the digital camera, I found a

whole new tool to aid in my research. Since I depend on recorded color to jog my memory of various situations, I was delighted to learn that digital technology is superior to emulsion film in that it records a greater range of color, especially when combined with color management software such as Adobe Photoshop. So, using the tools at hand and continually learning and practicing what I have learned thus far, I am



confident I can reproduce on canvas or paper my favorite subject; the sea.