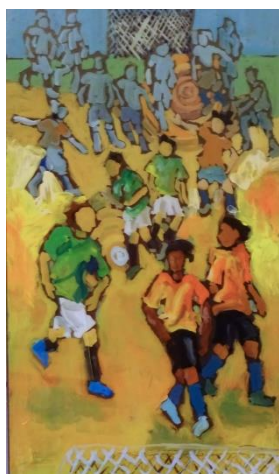


Salem Reads Art Exhibit: "Outcasts United" by Warren St. John



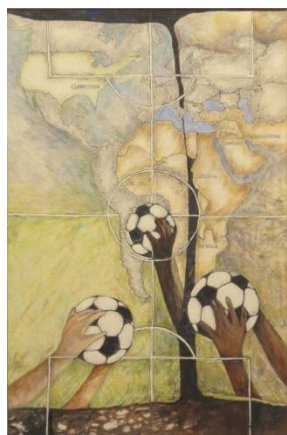
Ann Altman

On Goal, acrylic on plexiglass-reverse painting

The book painted a portrait in words of a group of young people inspired to do their best by a coach also driven to excellence. My painting strives to capture that exuberance of youth engaged in a well-fought game.

Visually, it was influenced by images from the Russian revolution which celebrated an ideal of athleticism while also representing a sense of movement (absent any political message!)

This piece, along with my recent work was done as a reverse painting directly on the surface. One builds the color up from foreground to back, while painting in reverse. The brushstrokes are preserved, but smoothed out against the glass, giving the work an interesting surface. This painting is done with acrylic paint on two separate substrates, plus a black backing.



Mary Goodson

The Magic of a Ball, painted fabric

In college I took a new class called Fiber Arts. It introduced me to the new surface of fabric to apply my paint and dye to, opening up an avenue of new possibilities. For this painting, I used acrylic paint and watercolor pencils on cotton fabric to tell the story about a soccer team called the Fugees. In the book "Outcasts United" a group of refugee boys from Africa, Liberia, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sudan grew up playing street soccer on the dusty, rocky surface of fields and roads. After moving to their new home in Clarkston, Georgia they were united together by the magic of a soccer ball and an amazing young woman, "Coach", from Jordan. Through the love of soccer she helps the boys and their families adapt to life in America. Like my using fabric as a new surface the Fugees now had the wonderful new surface of grass to use instead of dirt and a whole new life of possibilities.



Glenda Goodrich

99.9%

In *Outcasts United*, Warren St. John illustrates how refugees who settled in Clarkston, Georgia, were perceived as a threat to the community, causing residents to pass an ordinance prohibiting the game of soccer in the public park. The refugees were able to overcome obstacles and continue playing soccer. The "Fugees," as they called themselves, forged bonds that gave them a sense of home and belonging in their new environment.

This idea of "the alien other" is what I feel causes the hate and fear of racism that we experience in our world. We sometimes see others as dark and alien, different from us and, therefore, a threat to our security. We forget that something like 99.9% of our DNA is the same as every other human.

I chose to work the concept of dark aliens into my art piece to emphasize and exaggerate the idea of our fear of "the other." Woven behind and through the figures are the strands of DNA that weave us together as humans. In the upper right corner shines a silvery soccer-ball moon. My piece represents the notion that fear of the alien other is an abstraction, not the truth about who we are as humans. The truth is we have much more in common than we realize.

My process for creating this piece started with sketching several alien figures onto a black canvas. I then masked off the shapes to keep them black and rolled acrylic paint onto the canvas background. I added more figurative shapes and stenciled paint in layers to create the look of DNA. Finally, I added the texture over the figures to give them more dimension and diversity.

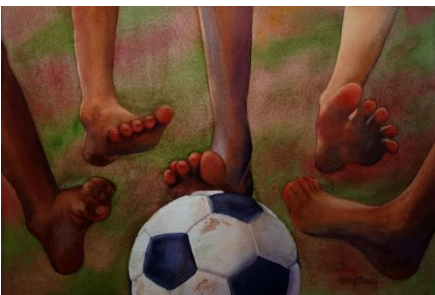


Susan Hartson

The Life We Passed Through, Watercolor collage on YUPO and Kilimanjaro watercolor paper

Beatrice knew she needed to make Mandela understand “the life we passed through”. It was important that he not forget the struggles and the losses during the war and all they endured to survive in refugee camps before obtaining asylum in America. "You forgot," she told her boys, "but I not forgot."

This painting shows Mandela looking back in time to the refugee camp, perhaps seeing himself with family members peering back at him. They hoped for a future of freedom and safety. His vantage point outside the barbed wire, in a place of relative safety, comfort and privilege, is contrasted by the dark stormy sky raining down on the slum of tents and mud, symbolizing the misery and uncertainty of living in a refugee camp.



Kathy Haney

Go for the Goal, watercolor on 300# watercolor paper.

My inspiration for this painting was the scene in “Outcasts United” when a new Fugee came to practice with one shoe in his backpack. He was teased for playing with only one shoe, the other foot bare. Luma took off her shoes and kicked the soccer ball, showing other teammates that playing without shoes was not only possible but effective. Soccer shoes were originally a rare commodity for the Fugee teams.

I chose to show a variety of feet kicking at the ball without shoes to represent the uniqueness of each individual. Shoes would camouflage that uniqueness. Feet are like fingerprints, each different and individual in size, shape and color. My grandsons, who represent three ethnic groups, posed for the foot “portraits”.

The bare feet illustrate the poverty of the players. They also show the bare necessities of play - feet and a ball! The background shows the red Georgia clay sparsely softened by clumps of grass.

The ball, life size, is positioned in the center and appears to be coming out of the painting, involving the viewer in the game. It also shows the wear of frequent play. Removing all the trappings of organized team sports leaves the essence of kids coming together to achieve the goal - the joy of play.



Kay Kranz

Fugees, Triumph over Diversity, watercolor

I was deeply moved by the book "Outcast United", the diversity and hardships these people had to overcome made me feel so pampered and spoiled. I had a hard time deciding on which direction to go. I am a realistic painter and was important for me to represent the book and tell the story...

I first wanted to show celebration and victory and so I painted fireworks in Red White and Blue for the United States... I also wanted to add the boys playing soccer. I painted them in as silhouettes I was greatly touched by Luma Mufleh's story. I read all I could about her on the internet. What a remarkable woman, her courage, her discipline, her unselfishness, was so touching. Without Luma there would not have been any "Fugees". I had to add her image to my painting. I also wanted to add the names of all the countries to honor them...I let the lettering be loose and random as to keep the painting free. This whole process was a challenge for me as not many times I have created my own painting design. I am honored to be a part of the "Salem Reads" project



Jean Lea

Confluence Focus, watermedia

The lingering thoughts I had while reading *Outcasts United* and after I had finished it, was how forming of the Fugees not only brought the players together on the playing field, but also evolved into expanded personal communication and engagement with family and others in the Clarkston community and beyond. In this artwork I wanted to illustrate the action and focus the players have pursuing the soccer ball with a common goal and intensity that removes them from their normal daily routine; and as with the Fugees, it also provides the players an escape from thinking of unpleasant past experiences.

This piece is watermedia artwork done in watercolor and acrylic. I painted it on a solid birch cradled panel with a watercolor surface coating. The completed painting was then sealed with UV archival acrylic varnish. I primarily paint with the watermedia to create abstract interpretations of nature and personnel interactions. Living in Oregon provides proximity to the ocean, farmlands, and mountains which are often the inspiration and stepping off point for my work.

In this work I also wanted to show the youngest players learning while doing. It brings back memories of the scenes described in the book and my personal experience watching my grandkids playing in their very first soccer games with some players so small their uniforms seem to swallow them. However, it didn't matter what size the players were or where they were from; they were focused and coming together with a common focus and mutual love of the game.



John Mohny

Fugees Score!, watercolor

I was struck by the severe hardships these kids endured in their journeys to the United States and then the severe poverty and hard work they encountered here. One of the few joys they had was in their soccer program. It gave them a place to be, a sense of belonging and helped kids from different cultures come together and bond even through all the misery that surrounded them. Their coach gave structure to their life.

I chose to portray a happy moment, a moment of exuberance as they scored a goal. I paint mostly in watercolor. I sketch the scene as I envision it and then arrange it to make a good composition on the watercolor paper. For this scene I chose warm colors to indicate the hot Georgia sun. This was painted wet on wet to give a variety of soft and hard edges.



Jude Morales

Halloween, acrylic on birchwood panel

“...They picked through their stashes of candy and one by one paused to look up and take in the scene before them: the glimmering, gabled homes, the throngs of kids laughing and running freely around a neighborhood, the incredible costumes they'd clearly spent hours perfecting. A comfortable American can afford to take a jaundiced view of suburban life. But this tableau was what many of the refugees who arrived here had imagined—and hoped—America might be like: a land of plenty, where each family had a home and a car, where parents could let their kids play in the streets without worrying about their safety.”

-Warren St. John *Outcasts United*

This passage is particularly rich in imagery and really represents both the theme and writing style of the book. It provides a glimpse into the lives of the refugee children portrayed in *Outcast United*. Their lives of transitioning and of hope. I chose to create a piece that would illustrate this scene because it really stood out to me visually. Once I re-read the passage, it also stood out as one that helps to translate the contrast of the lives of the refugees before America and of their lives now.



Kara Pilcher

***Shadows of Faith and Hope*, watercolor collage**

The soccer team of young refugees was challenged by the new American world in which they found themselves. I painted them as fragile paper dolls. Yet in a circle, holding on to each other, they found stability to stand united. The back of the paper dolls are old maps of the war torn countries which the families were forced to turn their backs on and flee. The front of the figures are designed from the USA flag, because they are facing each other now as fellow Americans.

On page 271 of *Outcasts United* the Under 13 Fugees huddled together before an important championship game at the end of the season. They knew they had to work together and somehow find that inner strength to compete against intimidating opponents. They bowed their

heads and “No one objected as Grace prayed aloud in Swahili and Eldin in Bosnian, first for the health and safety of their teammates, and if God saw fit, a victory. The sentiment was understood, even if the words were not.” All the boys responded in unison “Amen, Amin”. The shadows cast by these young men tells the story of faith and hope in their new home.



Rebekah Rigby

***From Afar*, mixed media**

Like Coach Luma, I have zoomed in and out over areas of land with Google Earth, searching. My intent was less practical, but still about finding something. I use that tool to find an artistic composition, unintended in its creation and therefore all the more intriguing. As I learned about Clarkston, GA, I was struck by the deliberate and yet unplanned nature of refugee resettlement. Humanity creates unplanned images across the globe in areas that possess the necessary components for habitation. Refugees are settled in places like Clarkston, due to the existence of suitable resources. This creates a different image for a community than would occur with normal city growth or even the usual routes of

emigration. There is such extreme diversity of origin that the town cannot take on the flavor of just one new culture as it might if the influx was from one place. The result is a complex interwoven tapestry that needs the careful attention of people like Luma, who possess vision and strength to guide individual lives into a cohesive community.

This piece includes multiple layers. First, I began with a background of Fugees quotes overlaid with pieces from a Google Earth image. I then indicated roads by using text about emigration in the languages of countries with high refugee populations. Next, I added paint and paper to complete the map. Finally, I finished the outer edge with flags of the many countries from which refugees in Clarkson originate. My intent is an aerial view incorporating elements of diverse origin into a tapestry of this community that has become home to so many who have traveled from afar.



Eric Wuest

***An Even Playing Field*, acrylic**

Imagine leaving all you’ve known behind. Imagine war and social upheaval. You don’t know the new language, you don’t know the customs of the land, and the food is strange. There may be a few kind souls that will help you find shelter or get a meal but otherwise you are on your own.

What can you do? By trial and error you learn the rules of your new home. You learn the language and begin to make friends. In America an even playing ground is essential

to a fair game. One team should not be expected to play soccer going uphill all the time! The rules are generally agreed-upon norms of behavior. They are a guide to the new game begun.

In *Outcasts United* coach Luma Mufleh--herself a Syrian immigrant--provides a safe place to learn the rules of life in this new world. Beyond the rules of a soccer game the players are “coached” in reading, writing and speaking English. The coach also provides guidance in growing up in this strange land where drug abuse and gang violence have destroyed too many young people. This list spells out what behavior is expected from players but also provides a social structure to build on and learn from.

The other team’s players know the rules, the expectations of them on and off the field. The rules presented by the coach provide a more even playing field between those that have grown up in this country and these strangers in a strange land. Eventually this strange land becomes home. But it all begins with learning the rules.