

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF ART COLLEGE

EST. 1923

DISTINGUISHED  
ALUMNI

THE COLLEGE FOR ART

100  
YEARS

ANNIVERSARY EDITION

## ***Richard H. Otto, President of the American Academy of Art College***



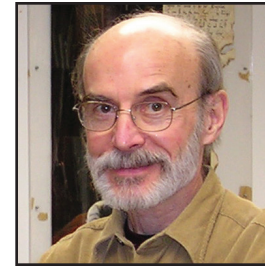
The year 2023 marks the American Academy of Art College's 100th anniversary. Since its inception, the Academy's mission has been to prepare students for a career as professional artists.

The Academy has always taken pride in providing an exceptional learning environment. The school's rich history has been built upon educating students with solid fundamentals in drawing and design. The Academy is committed to its full-time faculty and staff who, along with our outstanding board of directors and advisory committee, contribute to the tradition of excellent student results year after year.

Upon seeing the impressive artwork on display during a recent student visit, one of our distinguished alumni said "Prepare to be inspired." While this message certainly applies to the classroom, it also includes the achievements of our many students, both past and present. In this brochure, we are honored to recognize many of our distinguished alumni that have built sensational careers as professional artists, thus inspiring our incoming students as they pursue their own successful careers in art.

Richard H. Otto  
*President*  
American Academy of Art College

## ***Distinguished Alumni Award Recipients***



**Ted Smuskiewicz**  
2006



**Jill Thompson**  
2007



**Sandy Dvore**  
2008



**Michael Elins**  
2009



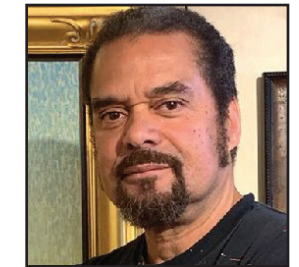
**Howard Terpnig**  
2010



**Loren Long**  
2011



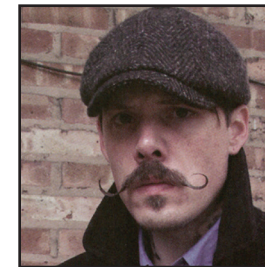
**Alex Ross**  
2012



**Thomas Blackshear**  
2013



**Gil Elvgren**  
2014



**Jason Seiler**  
2015



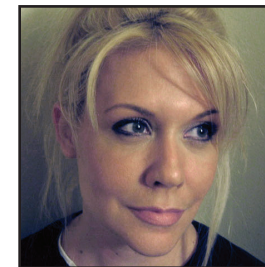
**Dawn Yamazi**  
2016



**Haddon Sundblom**  
2017



**Ed Vebell**  
2018



**Julia Lundman**  
2019



**Scott Tallman Powers**  
2020-2021



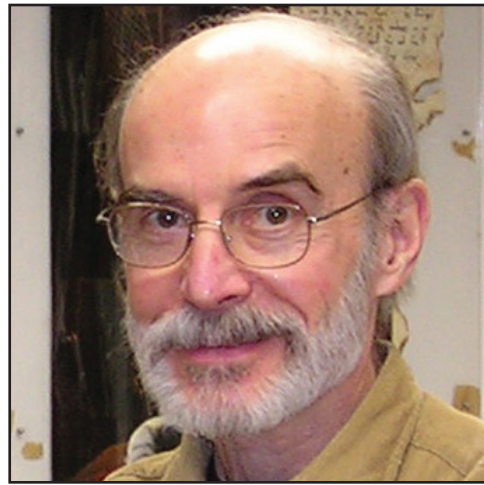
**J. Anthony Kosar**  
2022



**William Kaufmann**  
2023



**Shawn Michael Warren**  
2024

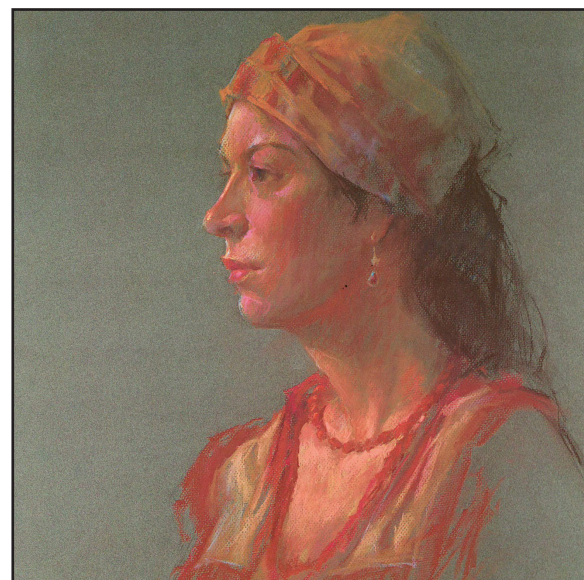


## Ted Smuskiewicz

**Born in Chicago, Illinois in 1932**, Ted Smuskiewicz received his formal art education at the American Academy of Art College in Chicago where he earned an AAS and a BFA degree. For the past fifty years he has been actively involved as a painter, teacher, and as an author in the field of fine art.

Exhibiting throughout the country, his work is in both private and public collections. Now retired from teaching, he was a faculty member of the American Academy of Art College from 1979 to 2005, where he taught oil painting and chaired the fine art department. Former American Academy students from his oil painting class include Scott Burdick, Sue Lyon, Nancy Guzik, Rose Frantzen, Alex Ross, Alfred Currier, Romel Delatorre, and Scott Tallman Powers.

As an author, his first book, *Creative Painting of Everyday Subjects* was published by Watson-Guptill in 1986. His second book, *Oil Painting Step by Step* was published by North Light Books in 1992 and 1997. He was a contributing author to a series of books on basic painting techniques published by North Light Books from 1994 to 1995. He has also written for *American Artist* and *Artist* magazines.





## Jill Thompson

A native of Forest Park, Illinois, Academy alumna and multiple Eisner Award winner, Jill Thompson is one of the world's best-known female comic book artists. Fitting, since, after all, this is a wonder woman we're talking about.

*Wonder Woman*, which Jill penciled for DC writer/artist George Perez, is just one of many titles she is known for. In 2016, she published the *New York Times* best-selling graphic novel counterpart, *Wonder Woman: The True Amazon*.

Jill has won seven Eisner Awards, including best painter for *Scary Godmother* in 2001, Best Painter/Multimedia Artist (interior art) for her work on the *The Dark Horse Book of Hauntings* in 2004, and in 2005 for "Best Short Story" for *Unfamiliar* (from *The Dark Horse Book of the Dead*) with Evan Dorkin. In 2011 the National Cartoonist Society named her Best Comic Book Artist for *Beasts of Burden*.

In 2015, Jill was ranked fourth best out of 25 artists who made it into the "Top 50 Female Comic Book Writers and Artists" poll conducted by Comic Book Resources.



Jill Thompson signing copies of her book.





## Sandy Dvore

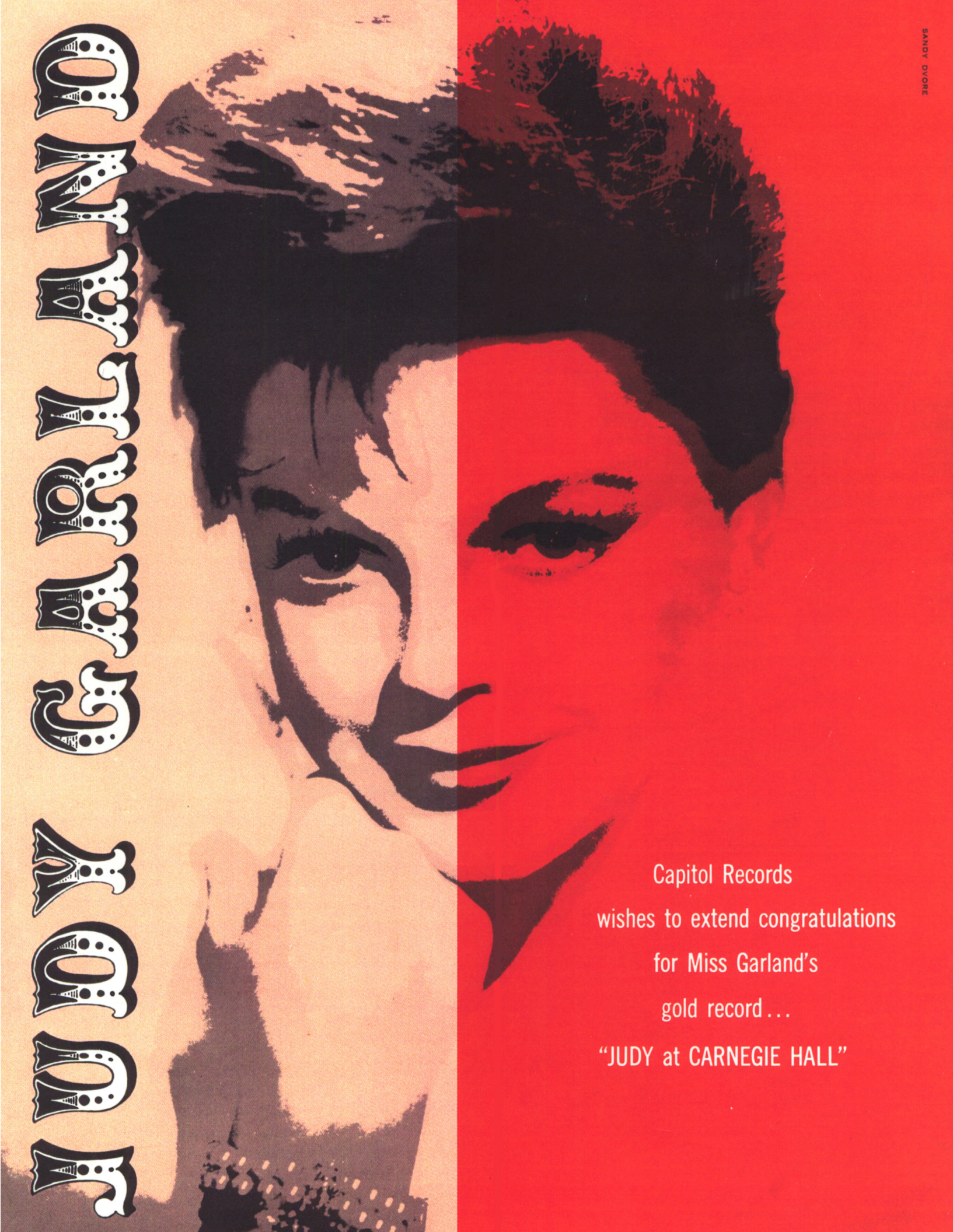
Sandy Dvore was honored in 2008 with the Distinguished Alumni Award. Although his may not be a household name, Dvore's work helped to invent television title design. Some of the title designs for which he is responsible include *The Partridge Family*, *The Waltons*, and *The Young and the Restless*.

Before making it to Hollywood, Dvore needed to hone the fundamentals of his craft. After leaving the University of Illinois, Dvore found the ideal academic and artistic environment for himself at the American Academy of Art.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Dvore produced artwork for major stars including Frank Sinatra, Vic Damone, and Judy Garland for their appearances in Las Vegas.

Dvore then began producing title designs for television programs. Further examples include the title design for *Knot's Landing*, *North & South*, and *Spenser: For Hire*. He won an Emmy for Outstanding Graphic and Title Design for his work on the show *Carol*, *Carl*, *Whoopi and Robin*.

Dvore's work was not limited to television and celebrity images. He also produced movie posters, helping to spearhead an art form upon which the movie industry now relies. Once again, the images that Dvore produced would become some of the most famous in motion picture history—these images include the posters for *The Great Escape*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *The Dirty Dozen*, and *Drugstore Cowboy*.





## Michael Elins

“I’m an unintentional trailblazer,” says Los Angeles artist Michael Elins. He says this not because he’s modest, although he is, but because it’s true. Elins’ story is one of serendipity, curiosity, timing, talent, and vision. Illustration sucked him in as an art student and spit him out a decade later.

The digital explosion—the Big Bang of the art world—recast Elins’ career and jettisoned him into the evolving meld of photography and illustration. Today he’s one of the most successful artists in the business, doing covers for all the major U.S. magazines, photographing superstars, and creating movie posters.

“I’m grateful for the way my career unraveled,” says Elins. “I can’t take credit for it. I’m not smart enough to have known what was to come, to have known that one day I would combine photography with painting and create something new.”





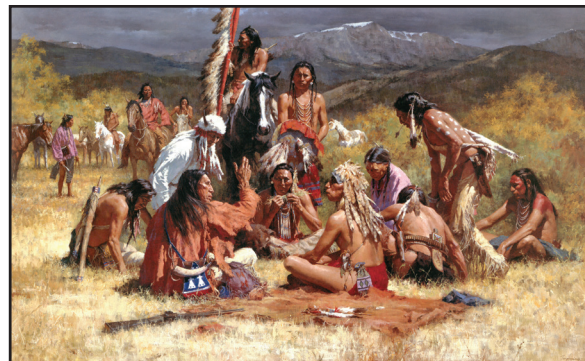
# Howard Terpning

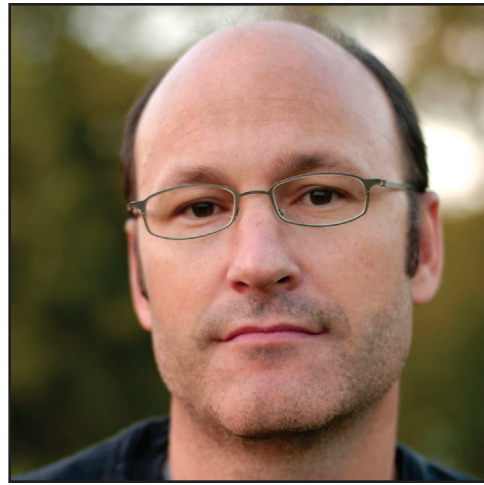
Howard Terpning is one of many world-renowned illustrators and fine artists who have lived and worked in Chicago. He is considered by many art aficionados—especially serious critics and collectors of Western or “cowboy” art—to be among the greatest illustrators and artists of his generation.

Born Nov. 5, 1927, in Oak Park, Illinois, Terpning attended The Academy in 1949 after serving as an infantryman in China during World War II. He pursued figure drawing and painting at The Academy, studying under the direction of fellow artists William Mosby and Antonin Sterba. At the time, Chicago was dominant in the advertising and illustration worlds. The community fostered lucrative opportunities for working artists, many of whom are acknowledged as the best of their generations today.

“Howard has been a real force in the art world for nearly three-quarters of a century,” explained Richard Otto, president of the American Academy of Art. “He learned his craft right here at the Academy, so it’s a real honor to present him with this award.”

In addition to illustrating for magazines Terpning completed over 80 movie posters starting with *The Guns of Navarone* in 1961. Other examples include *Cleopatra*, *Doctor Zhivago*, *The Sound of Music*, *The Sand Pebbles*, and the 1967 re-release of *Gone with the Wind*.





## Loren Long

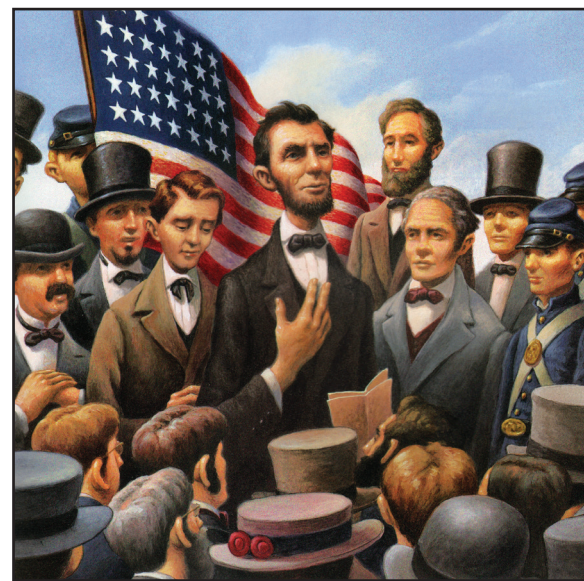
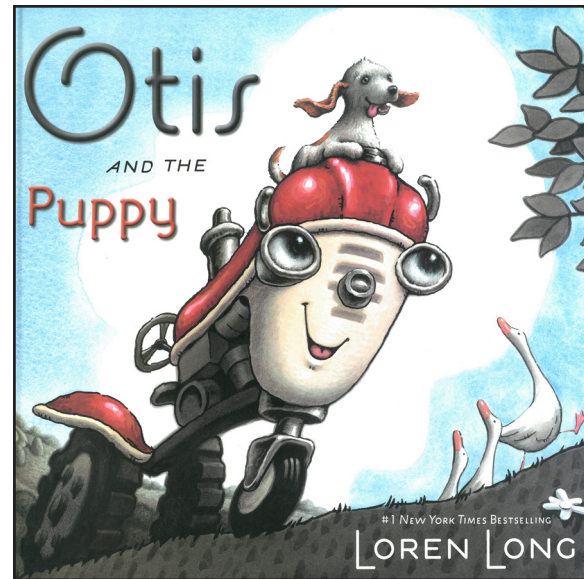
Loren Long has won numerous awards and has illustrated books for Frank McCourt, Madonna, Barack Obama, and other famous and accomplished authors.

After finishing his undergraduate studies, Loren decided he wanted to become a professional illustrator and attended the American Academy of Art College in 1987 and 1988. His first job after leaving the Academy was illustrating greeting cards with Gibson Greetings in Cincinnati.

Long is the author and illustrator of the *New York Times* bestselling picture books *Otis*, *Otis and the Tornado*, *Otis and the Puppy*, *An Otis Christmas*, *Otis and the Scarecrow*, and *Otis and the Kittens*. He is the #1 *New York Times* bestselling illustrator of President Barack Obama's picture book *Of Thee I Sing*, the re-illustrated edition of *The Little Engine That Could* by Watty Piper, and *Mr. Peabody's Apples* by Madonna. Loren's new edition of Clement C. Moore's *The Night Before Christmas* is a modern, more inclusive take on the classic.

Long's other *New York Times* best-selling books include *Toy Boat* by Randall DeSeve, which was awarded the 2007 *Publisher's Weekly* Cuffie Award for *Children's Picture Book*; *Angela and the Baby Jesus* by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Frank McCourt; and the chapter book series *Sluggers* that he created with Phil Bildner.

His most recent works are *Someone Builds the Dream* by Lisa Wheeler and the much anticipated picture book, *Change Sings* written by Inaugural Poet Amanda Gorman. The *Otis* series has been developed as an animated television series, *Get Rolling With Otis*, on Apple TV, which Loren Executive Produced.



# BARACK OBAMA of THEE I SING

## A Letter to My Daughters



ILLUSTRATED BY LOREN LONG



## Alex Ross

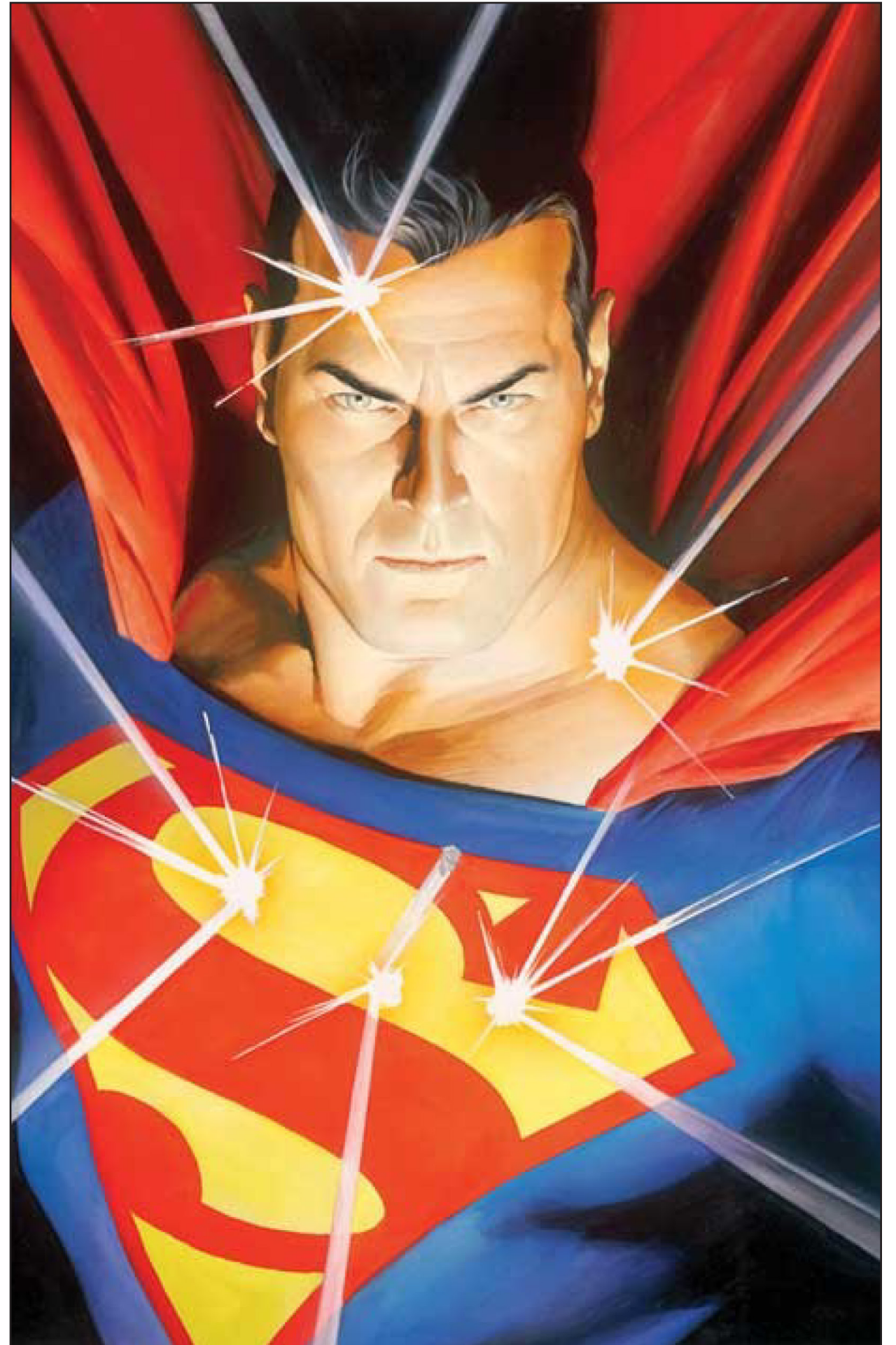
**Superstar superhero artist, pop-culture icon, and one of today's most recognized and successful comic book artists, 1989 Academy graduate Alex Ross was our 2012 distinguished alumnus. His accomplishments are nearly as impressive as Superman's abilities to leap tall buildings in a single bound.**

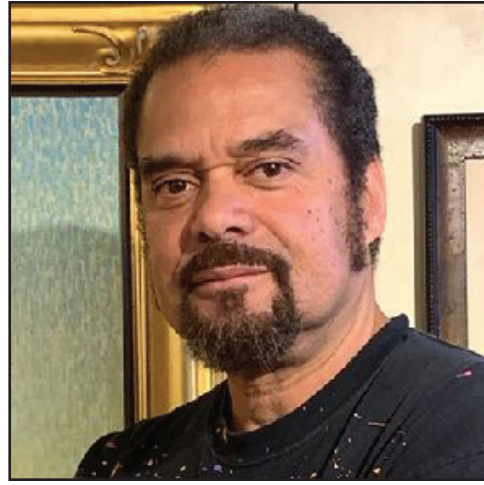
As one of the most in-demand illustrators and painters working today, Ross is credited with taking comic book and graphic novel art to new heights. Acclaimed for the photorealism of his work, he is often referred to as the "Norman Rockwell of the comic world".

On May 14, 2012, Ross accepted his award and spoke to the graduating class at the Academy's commencement ceremony. The high honor paid tribute to Ross's award-winning, 20-year career creating graphic novels, cover art, movie posters, video game art, and dozens of other highly recognized projects.



Alex Ross working from his home studio.





# Thomas Blackshear

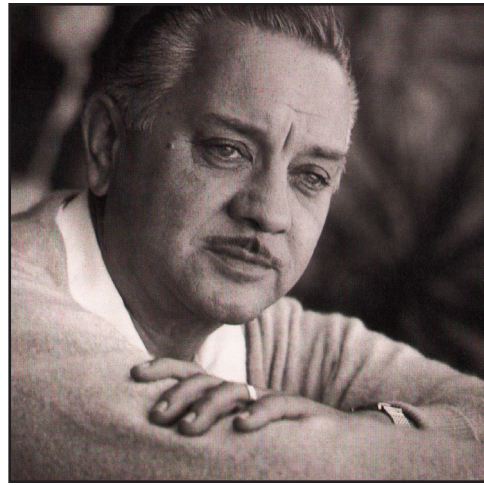
The American Academy of Art College named 1977 graduate Thomas Blackshear—former commercial illustrator, and prolific and celebrated artist of postage stamps, figurines, paintings, collectible plates, and much more—the 2013 recipient of its Distinguished Alumni Award.

“Receiving this significant recognition is a huge compliment,” explained Blackshear. “The Academy has been a key component of my success. And it’s a real honor to share this award with the talented past winners who came before me and whose work inspires me.”

Blackshear worked as an illustrator for 14 years—creating work for Hallmark Cards, Anheuser-Busch, Lucas Films, Universal Studios, Greenwich Workshop, and many other companies.

“Thomas has built a fantastic name and success for himself by pursuing his own unique vision,” said Richard Otto, the Academy’s president. “We’re thrilled to give him our most important award.”





Gil Elvgren painting in his studio.

## Gil Elvgren

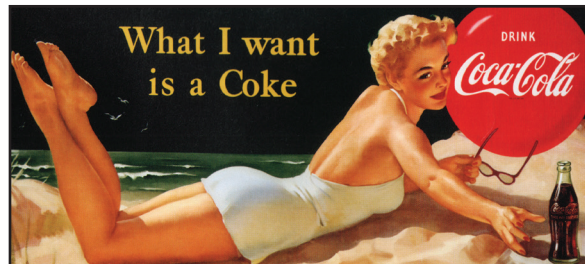
Gil Elvgren's art boosted the morale of American servicemen in World War II; increased sales and brand value for Coca Cola, General Electric and other companies; and brought joy to many.

Gil Elvgren was a 1936 graduate of the American Academy of Art. In 2014 the Academy celebrated Elvgren by posthumously giving him its highest honor, the Distinguished Alumni Award.

Elvgren was a painter and illustrator, best known for his pin-up girl paintings, which not only graced many calendars, but inspired the nose art on U.S. bomber and fighter planes and were used in magazine advertisements and billboards for large American companies.

His subjects—women posed in everyday situations and accidentally revealing a little more cleavage and garter-adorned thigh than was typical in the middle of the 20th Century—were definitely attention-grabbing. Many artists since have imitated Elvgren's style. Since then, pin-up girl art has experienced a huge resurgence. An original Elvgren pin-up can now sell for upwards of \$200,000.

"Gil Elvgren was a very influential American artist and talented beyond his popularity," stated Richard Otto, President, of the American Academy of Art. "We're honored that he attended and learned his craft at the Academy."





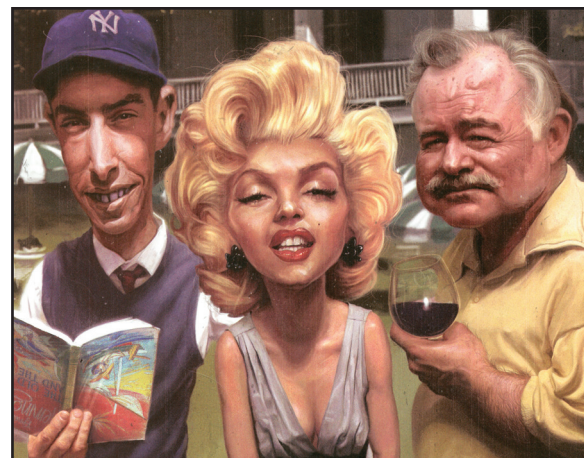
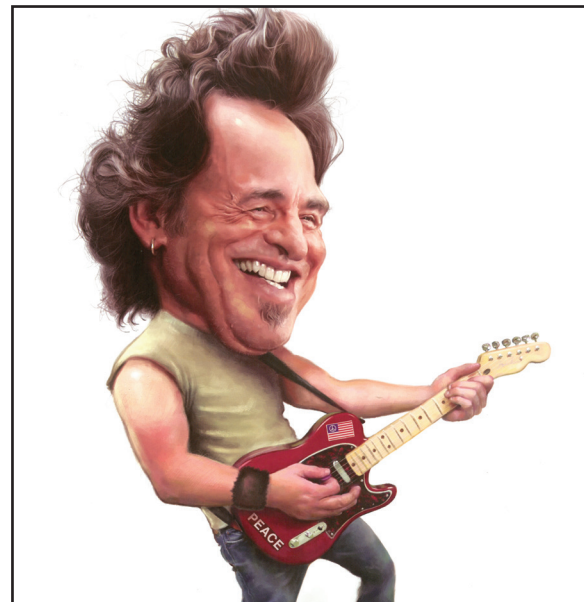
## Jason Seiler

The American Academy of Art College was thrilled to announce that former student Jason Seiler illustrated the cover for *TIME* Magazine's 2013 "Person of the Year"—Pope Francis.

"This magazine cover illustration of Pope Francis for *TIME* was as challenging an assignment as it was a huge honor," explained Seiler.

Seiler, who finished his studies at the Academy in 2006, spent 70 hours creating the image of Pope Francis on a 21-inch LCD display. He utilized many of the same techniques he employs when painting with oils or acrylics. Jason also created the illustration for *TIME* Magazine's second-place runner-up for its 2013 Person of the Year—Edward Snowden.

Seiler's illustrations and paintings have also been featured as covers and interior pieces for *Rolling Stone*, *Billboard*, *The Utne Reader*, *The New Yorker*, *Der Spiegel*, *Business Week*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Weekly Standard*, *MAD Magazine*, *GOLF Digest*, *AD WEEK*, and many other publications. Seiler has also worked for Disney, New Line Cinema, Universal Pictures, Aardman Animation and Sony Image—among others.





Dawn Yamazi accepts an Oscar for *Big Hero 6*.

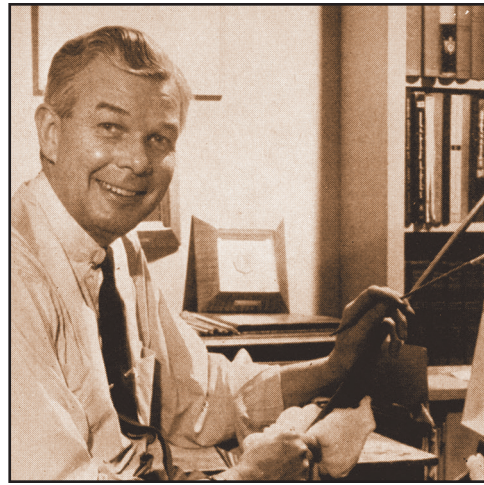
## Dawn Yamazi

Dawn Ernster Yamazi, the recipient of the 2016 American Academy of Art College Distinguished Alumni Award, is an animation talent and recruitment executive who thinks a career should have purpose, thoughtful design, grace, and good food.

Currently the VP of Talent Recruitment at Illumination, Dawn continues her adventure with companies where art and design are core to the business. Her former career highlights include time at Walt Disney Animation Studios, Netflix Animation, Universal Creative, Saban Entertainment, and Hallmark Cards, Inc. In 2005 she was responsible for the Talent Development of artists for films including *Meet the Robinsons*, *Bolt*, *Princess and the Frog*, *Tangled*, *Winnie the Pooh*, *Paperman*, *Wreck-it Ralph*, *Get-a-Horse*, 2013's Academy Award winning *Frozen*, *Feast*, 2014's Academy Award winning *Big Hero 6*, and *Zootopia*!

Dawn was born and raised in Chicago, and always had a passion for art, cartoons, and Mickey Mouse. In 1983, Dawn was accepted for the American Academy of Art, where she quickly found her people, purpose, and direction. The American Academy of Art College gave her the tools, experience, and applied knowledge to see great potential and excellence in art.





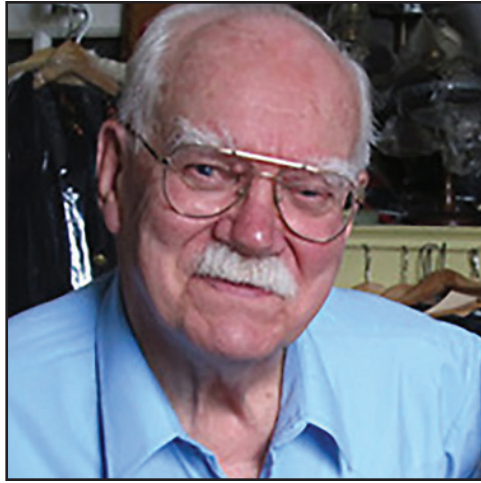
# Haddon Sundblom

In 2017, the Academy's graduating class was treated to a tribute to Haddon Sundblom, the man who created the lasting image of "the Coca-Cola Santa," by the Academy founder's grandson, Gary Young.

After graduating from the Academy in 1925, Sundblom went on to create some of advertising's most iconic images. One such image was the Quaker Oats man—who still adorns the brand's labels today. But none was as endearing—and enduring—as his images of Santa Claus for the Coca-Cola Company, which he began painting for Christmas advertising in 1931.

Gary Young's stirring tribute to Sundblom noted, "for Sunny—and so many others after him—it was the American Academy that flipped the switch that ignited the golden age of illustration." Gary continued, "(Among his many accolades), I am quite certain that Sunny would place above them all the Distinguished Alumnus Award bestowed upon him today by the American Academy of Art."





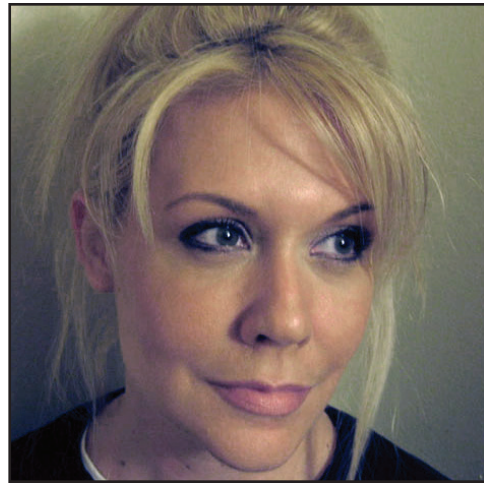
## Ed Vebell

Ed Vebell, the 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient, was born in Chicago, Illinois, the son of hardworking Lithuanian parents. At age 14, he applied for several scholarships. He received two from the American Academy of Art College and a third from the Commercial Art Institute. He studied at one in the morning and afternoon and the other at night. For the aspiring young illustrator, his relentless commitment to learning was about to bear fruit. At age 19, Vebell was offered a staff position at the Nugent-Graham Art Studios in Chicago.

After launching his professional illustration career in a busy Chicago agency, he enlisted in World War II and began his tenure in the United States Army in a camouflage company. It was not long before he was recruited to create imagery for *The Stars and Stripes*, a military publication that had featured Norman Rockwell's drawings during World War I. In 1945, he participated in the Nuremburg War Crimes Trial as a courtroom artist. Many of his Nuremburg works are now among the collections of the Museum of the Holocaust in Washington, D.C.

An Olympic fencer and World Champion, Ed married an accomplished practitioner of the sport and moved to Westport Connecticut, an active community of celebrated illustrators during America's mid-century. No stranger to hard work, he spent seven days a week in the studio to satisfy ongoing deadlines, creating paintings and drawings for mass circulation magazines like *Reader's Digest*, *Time*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *Sports Afield*. In February 2018, he was honored by the Westport Historical Society with an autobiographical exhibit that paid homage to his career and achievements.





## Julia Lundman

**Julia Lundman Midlock** was born in Minnesota and grew up on military bases throughout the United States and Germany, eventually ending up in Chicago, where she attended the American Academy of Art. While there, she studied painting under watercolorist Irving Shapiro and life drawing under Bill Parks.

While growing up, Julia was surrounded by the oil paintings of her grandmother, Lara Koop, who introduced her to impressionist painters through books, art shows, and by demonstrating the painting process. Other sources of inspiration come from the painters Zorn, Sorrolla, and Sargent, as well as many Scandinavian and Russian painters from the early 20th century.

The subject matter for Julia's still life painting is influenced by Ikebana, the traditional Japanese art of flower arranging.

"Still life painting is an interesting challenge to me," she explains, "because I am designing on two fronts: I'm arranging materials to create an interesting composition and then painting that arrangement using impressionistic color in a realist way, much like the Scandinavian Naturalists of the early 20th century."



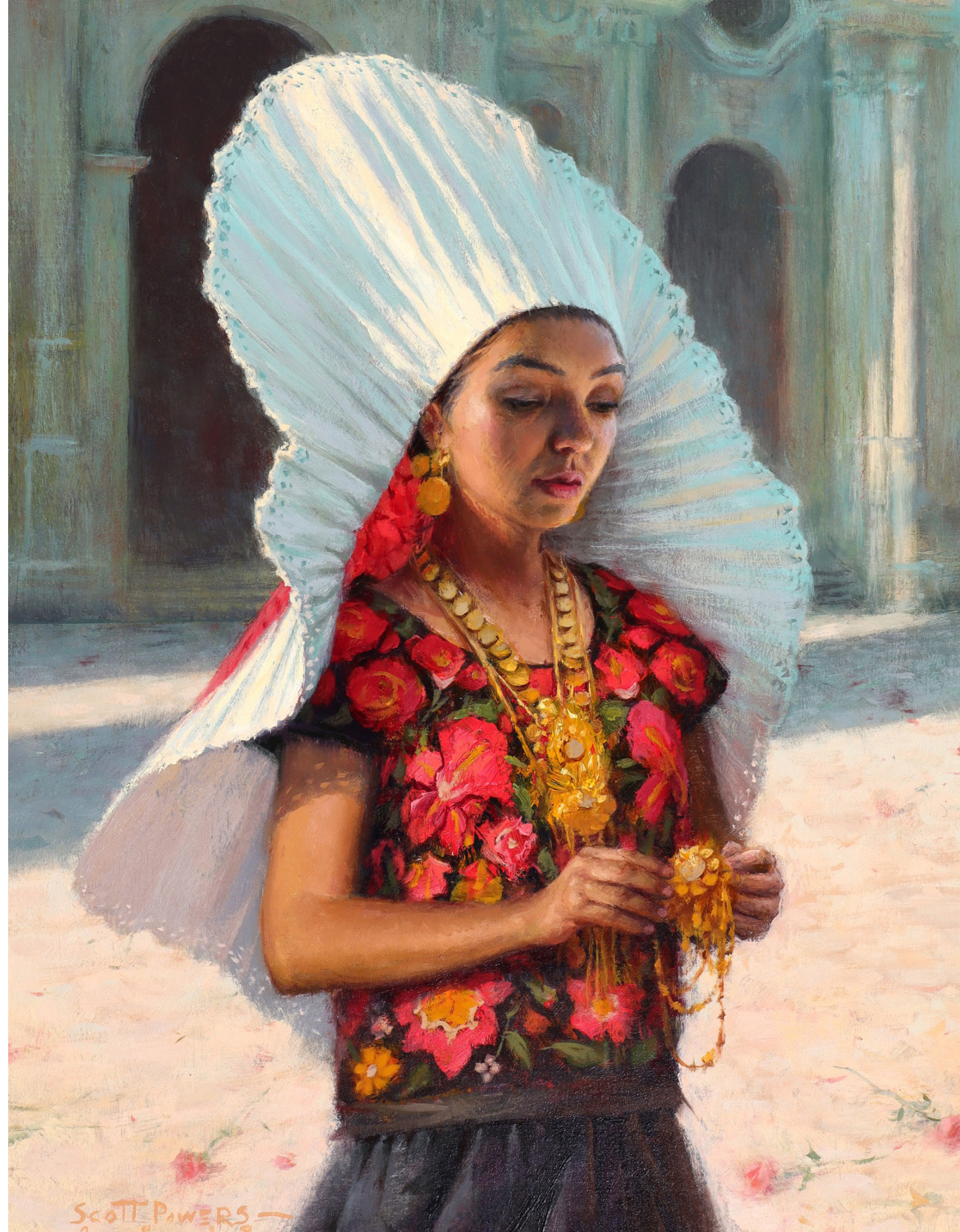


## Scott Tallman Powers

**Scott Tallman Powers** was born in 1972 in Birmingham, Alabama. His love of art came early, as his father was a medical illustrator, photographer, and fine artist. Scott continued his art education by earning his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the American Academy of Art. His training in life drawing, oil painting, watercolor, anatomy, and sculpture laid the foundation for his successful career as a professional artist.

Our distinguished alumnus has works in many private collections in the United States and around the world. His paintings grace the walls of The Wengyuan Museum of Fine Art, the Shaoguan Museum of Fine Art in The Guangdong Province of China, and The Academy Museum in Easton, Maryland.

Scott's work has been celebrated with many awards from the Oil Painters of America as well as many other national exhibits. He has participated in many prestigious invitational exhibitions in the United States, China, Israel and Europe. His work has appeared in many publications including *American Artist*, *Art of the West*, and *Western Art and Architecture*. His work has been featured in *The American Artist "Workshop" Magazine*, *Southwest Art Magazine* and *Western Art Collector*.





## J. Anthony Kosar

J. Anthony Kosar is an Emmy-nominated make-up FX artist and entrepreneur. Through his company, Kosart Studios LLC, he specializes in special FX make-up, prosthetics, sculpture, creature FX, masks, FX props, concept art, illustration, and fine art. Anthony attended the American Academy of Art College, where he earned a BFA in Illustration and was Valedictorian of the class of 2008.

A somewhat self-taught artist, Kosar attended the Academy to gain fundamental skills and a formal education in illustration, fine art and painting. Kosar specializes in and provides fine art, illustration, sculpture, creature design, make-up FX, and product design through his Westmont, Illinois-based company Kosart Effects Studios.

In 2007, he interned at the legendary Stan Winston Studio, creating effects for *Indiana Jones 4* and James Cameron's *Avatar*.

J. Anthony Kosar added to his long list of accomplishments becoming season four champion of the Syfy channel's reality-based *Face Off* program. The show is one of the biggest make-up special effects (FX) competitions in the world and certainly on TV. Kosar's prizes included a 2013 Fiat 500 car and \$100,000.



Anthony Kosar wins *Face Off*.



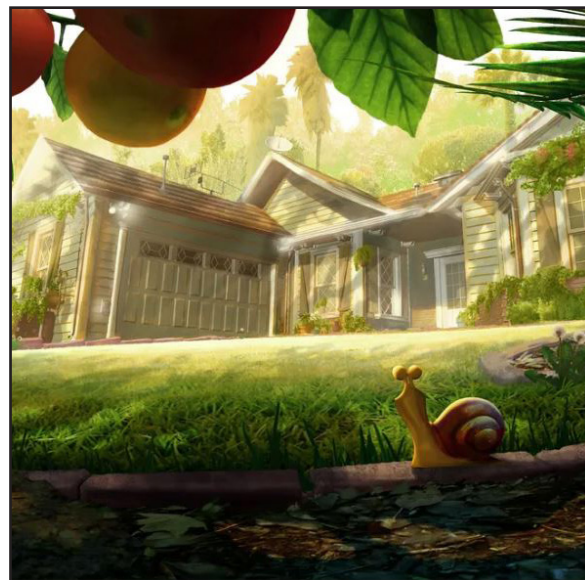


## William Paul Kaufmann

Many illustrators have dreams of going on to work for major animation studios like Disney and DreamWorks. Bill Kaufmann, Academy alumni and recipient of the 2023 Distinguished Alumni Award is fortunate enough to have worked for both during his 32-year career in the animation industry.

Growing up, Kaufmann's favorite time at school was when he could draw and paint. His love for art never faded and he went on to study at the Academy. After completing his degree, the Academy's Career Services Coordinator told him about a lead on a job with Disney, where he was hired in 1990. His most notable work at Disney was painting backgrounds for the Walt Disney Feature Animation *Beauty and the Beast*. He then moved on to Hyperion Animation, working primarily on *Bebe's Kids*. Four years later, a former Hyperion colleague approached him about a new animation company. After interviewing with the producer, he accepted a job on the ground level of what would become DreamWorks Studios. While there, he worked on major studio films including *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* and *Kung Fu Panda*.

Many 2023 Academy grads grew up with the animated films he worked on and took all his artistic advice to heart during commencement. We are so very honored to have Bill included in our list of esteemed alumni.





## Shawn Michael Warren

On Wednesday, December 13, 2023, the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery unveiled a new portrait of Oprah Winfrey painted by artist and Academy alumnus, **Shawn Michael Warren**. Warren was chosen for the commission after his involvement in a mural project featuring Winfrey in Chicago's West Loop. To set the scene for the painting, Warren traveled to Winfrey's Montecito estate in California, where he discovered the backdrop featured in the final portrait. The oil on linen painting can now be seen on display at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C.

Warren had no formal training in the arts until he attended the American Academy of Art College. His work has been exhibited across the country and includes prominent figures like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Dr. Maya Angelou, and Marshall "Major" Taylor, alongside narrative pieces exploring themes such as the Great Migration, the tragic events in Tulsa's Greenwood Community, and the water crisis in Flint, Michigan.

A critic of his own work, Warren described his process by saying, **"The drawing is the most important. If the drawing is incorrect, the painting is not going to do well. The drawing is the bare bones. I am a very avid believer and practitioner of drawing. Having the fundamentals of drawing down pat for a portrait is essential, and I would encourage any artist always to draw."**



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