

## That Great Paper, Strathmore Aquarius II®

by Don Getz

After spending my first twenty-three years as a commercial artist and the last ten as an evening watercolorist, I decided to change directions and leap into a career of painting and teaching watercolor workshops. I taught evening classes two nights a week, while continuing my studio work, but found that it was just too much to handle given the pace of the commercial studio. At that same time, I was serving at an Akron ad agency in the role of television commercial storyboard creator and supervisor of the studio production of the commercials in New York City and L.A.; thus my 'home' time was really fractured. It was at this time that I made the decision to leave the ad world for the peace and quiet of fine art and teaching watercolor. My first experience participating in a watercolor workshop on Monhegan Island in Maine guided me in making this decision. The demand for watercolor sessions was immense at that time; it was 1977 and there were relatively few workshops taking place in comparison to today. The ad agency expected my return within a few months – that never happened.



### *Wild4U*

Strathmore® 500 Series Vellum Bristol

Prior to 1977, my watercolors were created on a top quality rag 300 lb. CP paper, using Windsor/Newton professional watercolors. That piece of white paper literally scared the daylights out of me – one wrong brushstroke and it was lost! Thus, I was a very timid painter and very tight as well, which I attribute to my commercial illustrative background.

My saving grace came from an unexpected source. While at the ad agency I did my illustrations on Crescent Number One illustration board and saved the small leftovers for acrylic projects at home. My technique was to coat these pieces of illustration board with one coat of gesso and then create 'photorealism' on them with acrylics. One day, unknowingly, I put the watercolors on the gesso surface and the colors fish-eyed like crazy creating some very interesting patterns. I also discovered that I could lift the watercolors entirely back to the white of the gesso surface. WOW! Suddenly, a whole new world of watercolor opened up to me; new avenues not previously realized were suddenly now at my very brush tips!

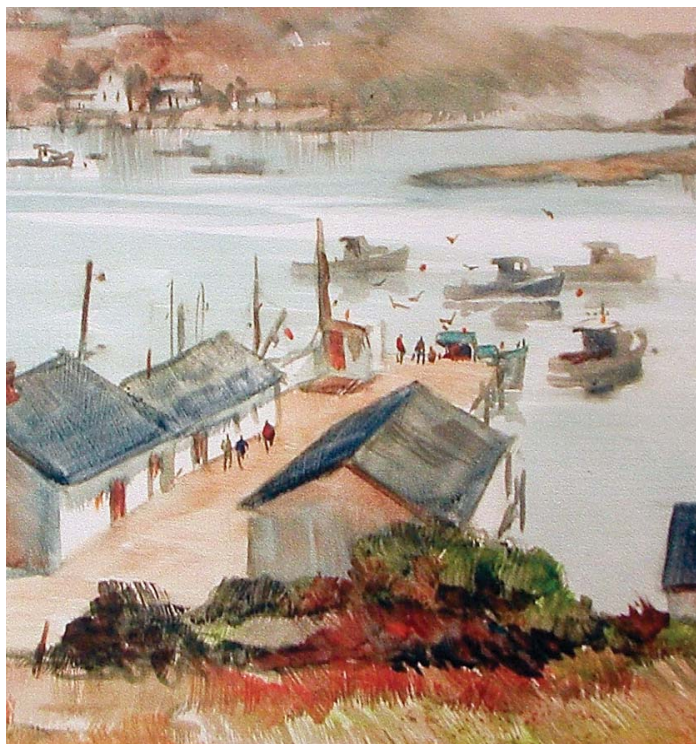
When I teach workshops I do a morning demo every day on a half-sheet watercolor paper. I tried applying one coat of gesso to both 90 lb. and 140 lb. watercolor paper but the paper tended to curl – and I surely had no desire to use expensive 300 lb. paper for class demos. Then I remembered the old Strathmore Aquarius sheet – it used to make me itch like crazy, but was a fiber based sheet that might meet my needs. Ruppel's Art Supply in Akron informed me that Strathmore had a new sheet, Aquarius II®, which was



### *Lands End, Cornwall, England*

Watercolor on gessoed Aquarius II® paper

also fiber based but without the itch. The Aquarius II® sheet was perfect for my application and I was on my way. Aquarius II® is an 80 lb. sheet that is reasonably priced and stays nice and flat after a single application of gesso. I usually prepare five or six of the half-sheets the night before a workshop, laying them out on brown butcher's paper on my studio floor and allowing them to dry overnight. Properly coating the paper with gesso is another important step. I pour the gesso, about the size of an egg, in the center of the half-sheet. I then use a cheap one inch nylon 'hardware' brush to paint along the top edge and one side. I do this by dragging the brush across the sheet near the top edge and then do the same down one side. After that I take the nylon brush and stroke the gesso off the paper, covering the top and one side. It is important not to drag the brush with gesso back onto the paper, as this deposits the gesso under the paper's edge and will cause it



***Pemaquid Harbor***

Watercolor on gessoed Aquarius II® paper

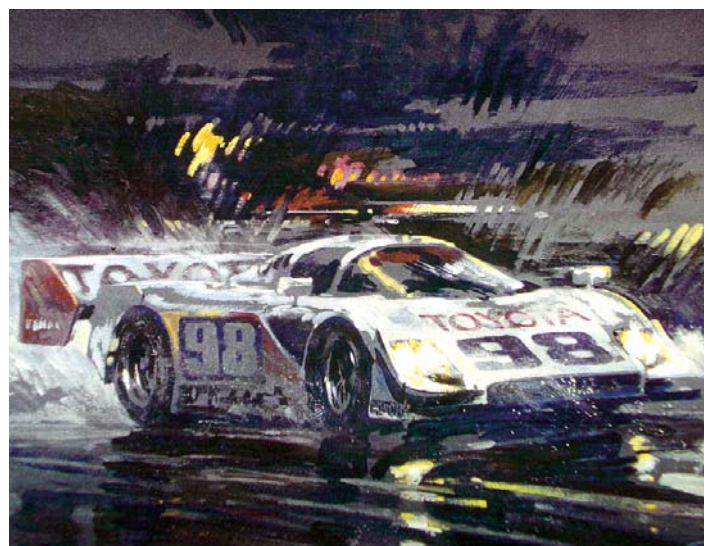
to stick to whatever you place it on and dry. After the edges are coated, I drag a nylon brush in short artistic strokes over the areas not yet covered with gesso. One healthy coat is all that you need, again only on the one side which will



***Ode to 'Arley'***

Acrylic on gessoed Gatorbord panel

serve as your painting surface. This may sound involved, but it works; leaving short brushstrokes in the gesso surface becomes an important part of the painting texture. I use Golden brand and Liquitex brand gesses which both work equally well. The Golden is a bit thicker but shouldn't be thinned with water. It is important to remember not to paint with sable art brushes on the gesso surface, as that surface has 'tooth' and will soon destroy an expensive sable. I rely solely on Cheap Joe's Golden Fleece synthetic brushes which are reasonably priced and high quality. I then 'draw' my design on the gesso surface with a 'rigger'

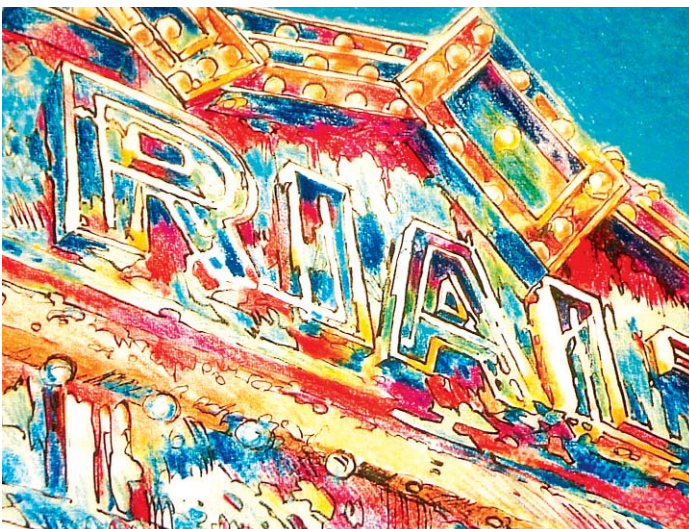


***Sebring Challenge***

Acrylic on canvas



**Silver Lady**  
Watercolor on gessoed Aquarius II® paper



**Lights Out at The Realto**  
Watercolor on gessoed Aquarius II® paper

brush with watercolor, which will ‘disappear’ into the design of the painting. Drawing on the gesso surface with pencil is not advised, as it is difficult to eliminate the pencil lines. I also use Cheap Joe’s American Journey watercolors, again a professional grade with the right price. Since my discovery in 1977 of painting with watercolors on gesso surfaces, I no longer fear that ‘bare white surface’; in fact, I now attack it with a vengeance. Try it, you may share the same

enlightenment. My hardest job is convincing workshop participants that the 80 lb. Aquarius II® paper will NOT curl up or give you ‘hills and valleys’ like a regular sheet of 80 lb. watercolor paper. Once they try it, they are sold on it! Most of my studio paintings are full sheet size or larger. For my large scale automotive art works I use a 30" X 40" illustration board or gessoed Gatorbord. These works are finished with three or four spray coats of automotive clearcoat; the same stuff which protects the paint finish on your automobile.

On June 1, 2006 I was awarded the project of creating a large mural in celebration of my hometown, Salem, Ohio's, 200th Anniversary. The only stipulation to this award was to have the mural done and on the wall of a building in the heart of downtown Salem by July 15th! I met with the project committee and received a bundle of reference materials with the idea that I might pick nine or ten events to include on the mural. After reviewing material, I chose to include 54 items on the mural, as the original village contained 54 plots of land. This astounded the committee, but they bought the concept. I had shown them some of my watercolor journal studies which consist of ink sketches with watercolor washes. I did a sampling of nine scenes to show the committee who accepted the direction and called the concept “very fresh.” My new dilemma – how to take these six inch square ink and watercolor studies and enlarge them each to three foot square and have it all on a building in a little over one month's time! Working with Digital Color Imaging of Akron, Ohio, the printer scanned



**Salem Ohio City of Peace**  
Watercolor printed on vinyl



my 54 ink sketches and printed them on watercolor paper, upon which I added the watercolor washes. These color images were then scanned again, and all of the scans were digitally 'stitched' together creating a 20' X 30' mural. The mural was digitally printed on perforated vinyl and hung on the building on Friday, July 14th, the day before the big anniversary celebration. The mural images were just as sharp as my original sketches, as no standard photo process was used in completing the project. It met with great acclaim and the only typical 'photo' taken was of the finished hung mural for newspaper publicity.

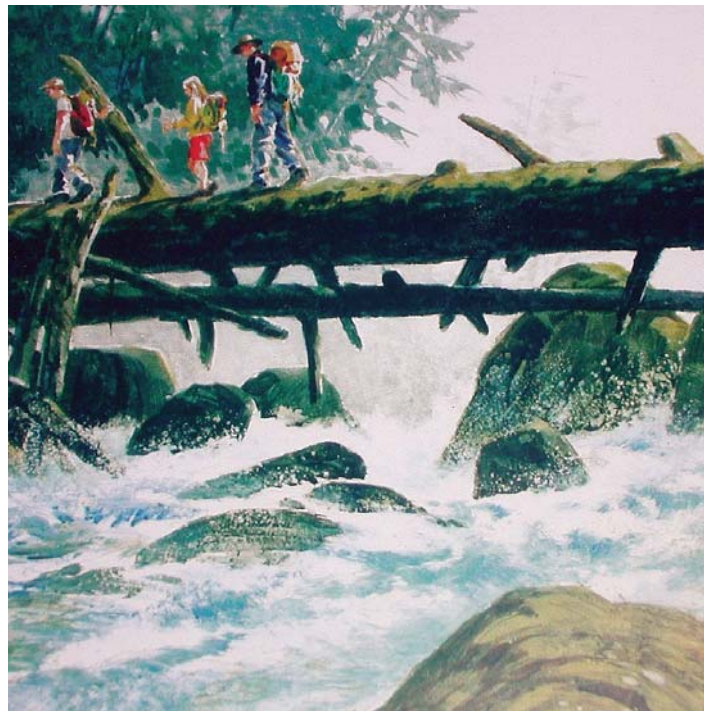
More recently I had the opportunity to specify an additional Strathmore product, 100 lb. Grandee Bright White printing paper for the cover of the 2007 American Watercolor Society Exhibition Catalog. It gives the catalog the 'look' of watercolor paper which is most effective especially in this case. I have also supervised the design and production of the annual AWS catalog since 1985.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

### Don Getz

Don Getz is a signature life member and a vice president of the American Watercolor Society; signature member of Midwest Watercolor Society; and founder and life member of the Ohio Watercolor Society. Getz is also a member of the infamous W.P.A. – the Whiskey Painters of America – a notorious group of artists scattered across the U.S. who paint miniature watercolors using alcohol, instead of water. Getz is not a 'charter' member, but one of only three of the original members still licking their brushes. In his duties with the AWS, Getz has produced the annual exhibition color catalog since 1985.

Don Getz splits his painting time between landscapes, seascapes and his true love, automotive art. He annually teaches ten to twelve art workshops a year, preferring to paint 'en plein air', which has gotten him very involved in creating watercolor journals on his many trips across the country, to Canada, Great Britain and France. After being away from commercial art for twenty-eight years, he was called back to the art director's post at AUTOMOBILE QUARTERLY, the bible of the classic car industry, in 2003, serving in that position until the winter of 2005, when he



***Crossing Roaring Brook, Adirondacks***

Watercolor on gessoed Gatorbord

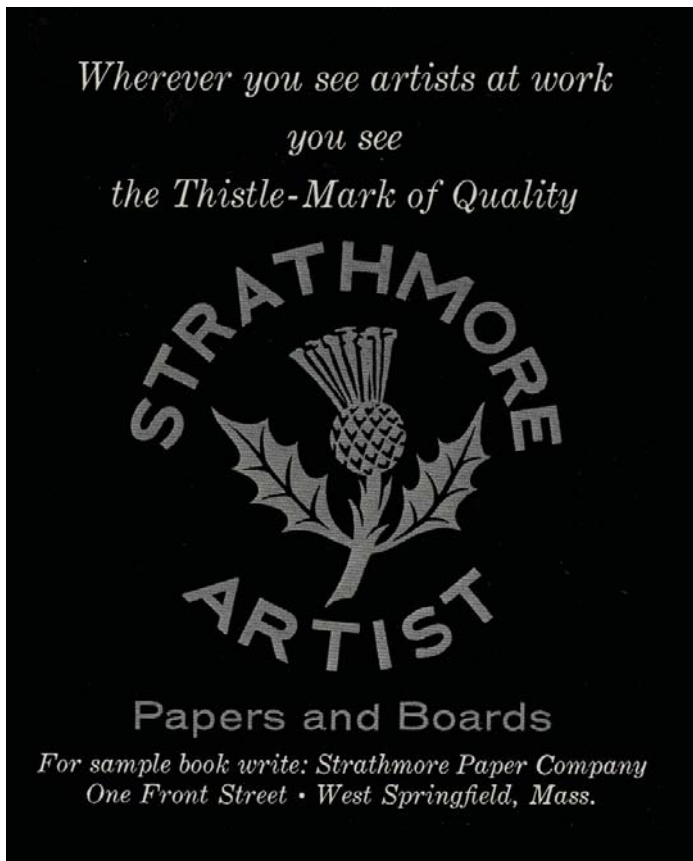
and his wife, Judie, returned to northeast Ohio and their beloved Cuyahoga River Valley. His favorite painting locations are the coast of Maine, the Adirondack Mountains of upstate New York and the Southwest. But, then again, you might just find him along a country road in some god-forsaken place, doing 'his thing' – sketching and painting in watercolors.

More of his samplings can be viewed at his website, [www.watercolor-online.com/DonGetz](http://www.watercolor-online.com/DonGetz).

## Strathmore Artist Papers™ Advertising Then and Now

Digging through our archives, we have found that not only do the roots of Strathmore Artist Papers reach far into the past, but that many of the papers, advertising and selling techniques that we use today were born many years ago.

On March 17, 1892 Horace A. Moses turned the first shovel of dirt for a new paper mill in West Springfield, Massachusetts. Called the Mittineague Paper Company, the mill began producing writing papers, bookkeeping papers and cotton-fiber artist papers in December of 1892. In the mid-1890's Mr. Moses made a trip to the Strathmore Valley in Scotland and immediately became inspired by its beauty and the blooming August thistles. By 1895 Mr. Moses began using the phrase "Strathmore Quality" and the thistle as a symbol of the highest quality papers. The company



was renamed Strathmore Paper Company in 1911. Interestingly, the Strathmore® name on artist papers preceded the name change of the company. In an advertisement from the October 1900 issue of Architectural Illustration Magazine, Strathmore Illustrating Board is promoted by a renowned illustrator of the period, Dan Beard. Mr. Beard illustrated several books, including the first edition of Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Strathmore Illustration and Drawing Board are still produced by Strathmore and are two of the oldest products in the Artist Papers line. Also of note is that the advertisement advises the consumer to ask for a sample book, something else that survives to this day!

Further digging produced an early advertisement from the 1930's in the Art Materials Trade News, enticing retailers to keep their shelves stocked with "the extensive line of famous Strathmore Artist Papers, Boards and Pads . . . to meet most of the needs of every customer who comes into



your store.” In that same period, we also found the use of the slogan, “Paper is Part of the Picture.” This slogan has been used by Strathmore Artist Papers ever since. Marketing strategies that were launched in the first fifty years of Strathmore Artist Papers remain viable advertising and selling forums. Greeting card and illustration contests have woven their way in and out of the fabric of our marketing programs since the 1940’s. These contests continue to serve as a billboard in promoting product, media and artist.

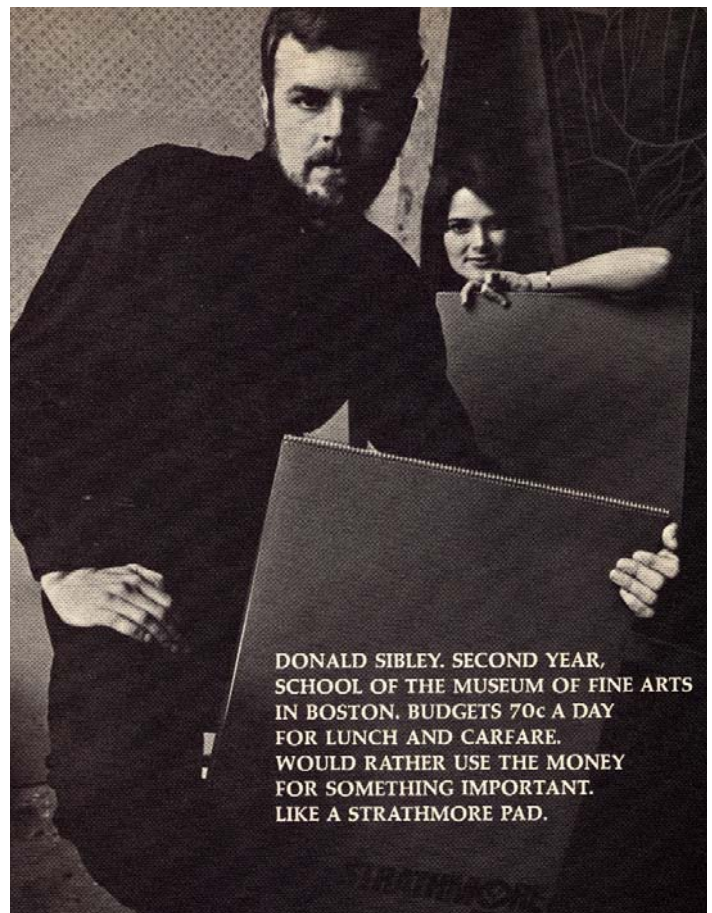
Another popular method of promoting our products through the years has been the artist spotlight. First made popular in artist’s magazines in the 1940’s and 1950’s, the concept of featuring an artist who uses Strathmore Artist Papers now appears on our website in quarterly installments. We still have not come up with a better method of promoting a product than to have a recognized artist speak of their experience with Strathmore Artist Papers and why they remain loyal to the brand. The one main change is that today, with technology, we can display the featured artist’s artwork on our website and link back to their website.

Current advertising themes also have deep roots. One of the most popular themes that we have used throughout our history is to feature product and people in natural settings. In the late 1990’s and early 2000’s we ran several ads that read “When Artists talk...they talk Strathmore.” These ads were inspired by an ad campaign that ran in the late 1960’s featuring college students at different stages of their collegiate careers explaining why they use Strathmore. Since we have been “digging” we did a bit more research to find out what happened to those artists that were featured in those ads.

We were able to locate two of those students to find out where their collegiate training took them. Carl Fowler, last seen posing with a Strathmore Watercolor pad at Rochester Institute for Technology, “graduated from a professional photography program and has been a freelance advertising photographer for thirty five plus years.” Carl lives in the Cleveland area. Donald Sibley, posing with a Strathmore Charcoal pad outside of The Museum of Fine Arts in Boston circa 1967, now teaches at that same institution!

Don mentions that he uses the slide of himself to show incoming students that he was once one of them. Don now lives on Martha’s Vineyard and has been “very active in garden design and construction.” Japanese influence is reflected in both his garden design and paintings which he exhibits at “various island galleries.”

Strathmore Artist Papers moved from its original location in West Springfield, Massachusetts to Westfield, Massachusetts in 1976 and was relocated to Neenah, WI in 2006. So much has changed yet so much remains the same. Strathmore Artist Papers remains the high quality product that was the vision of Horace Moses when he turned that first shovel of dirt 115 years ago. We have advanced to the digital age in both advertising and product line but rest assured that paper will always be part of the picture.



**DONALD SIBLEY. SECOND YEAR,  
SCHOOL OF THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS  
IN BOSTON. BUDGETS 70c A DAY  
FOR LUNCH AND CAREFARE.  
WOULD RATHER USE THE MONEY  
FOR SOMETHING IMPORTANT.  
LIKE A STRATHMORE PAD.**

## Featured Product

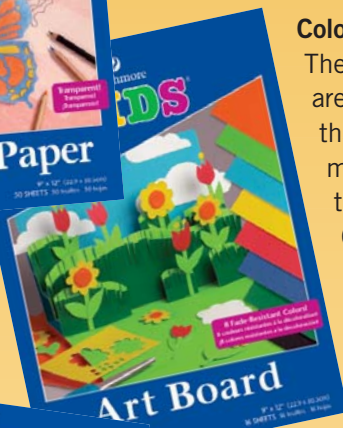
**Strathmore Artist Papers™ adds three new items to the Kids portfolio just in time for summer vacation!**

Available in June, these papers are perfect for summer craft projects, just add imagination!



### Tracing Pad

This economical, semi-transparent parchment sheet is great for designing and sketching. Kids will love tracing their own designs and using them to decorate their art projects. Pricing is parent approved!



### Colored Art Board

These colorful 14 point fade-resistant boards are great for anything that kids can build that needs a little strength to it. Dioramas, miniature houses, mobiles, cut outs, anything that needs color and durability. Colors are printed on one side and include: Red, Canary, Orange, Light Green, Emerald Green, Azure, Rich Blue and Black.



### White Art Board

These 14 point smooth white boards are just right for creating paper sculptures, signs, bulletin board cut outs, masks and block printing. Use these white boards as a base for craft projects and collages that need to be supported.

