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## **Why I Paint the Wind**

by Marie Wise

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Artists like to paint things they can see or touch, like bowls of fruit or pretty sunsets. Often they paint concepts like love or anger by portraying the concept with a concrete object, like two lovers in Gustav Klimt's "The Kiss," which we all recognize as symbolic for love. Edvard Munch's "The Scream" shows an agonized man crying out, and our minds immediately associate anger or fear.

Some concepts are harder to portray than others. Like weather, or wind. How do you paint wind, and why would an artist choose this subject?

My art exhibit, Power of the Wind, is about wind; symbolized by something we can see and touch, wind turbines.

Why did I choose this subject? Like most artists, I draw inspiration from things I see, feel and experience. Often the process is both awe-inspiring and frustrating, because paintings can take on a life of their own. In the case of Power of the Wind, I think the subject chose me.

For many years I worked in the port industry, most recently at the Port of Longview, where I photographed and wrote news articles about behemoth-sized wind turbine parts as they arrived from Asia. Towers, blades and other components were unloaded from ships and moved across the dock by longshore workers. Trailers and rail cars were loaded with wind parts for transport to construction sites across the nation. I met wonderful people involved with wind energy at other ports, steel companies, conferences and trade shows. It was a fascinating and eye-opening experience, one I will never forget.

This experience, combined with encouragement from a port colleague, resulted in my first wind painting. We learned there was to be a wind energy art exhibit at the wind conference we attended in 2005, and my colleague said, "Marie, you should paint something!" I replied, "That would be neat, but I need reference material." You see, contrary to the belief that artists can "paint something from their head," I need a visual reference, a picture, or something to use as guide.

So she found a photo she'd taken of a lone turbine standing sentinel over snow-capped mountains in Quebec, Canada. Perfect! I painted the grey-green-blue snow-covered mountains with joy, was juried into the show and exhibited my painting in Pittsburgh along with other artists' wind-energy works. As an artist, it's a source of great pride and joy to be considered worthy to exhibit my work.

After that, I thought, why not paint another. I became fascinated with the geometric shape of a wind turbine. My husband and I made several trips across Washington and Oregon, en route to WSU where my daughter attended college, to photograph wind turbines. On a trip to Montana

we stopped at Judith Gap, where a wind farm with parts imported through the Port of Longview was under construction.

In 2006, another port colleague with an interest in the arts said, “Marie, you need to paint BIG! That made sense, because wind turbines are BIG! My husband enlisted a student artist in Portland to stretch big canvases at an economical price, and I began painting BIG.

Large canvases gave me the opportunity to incorporate not only the visual impact of wind turbines on the landscape, but my own experiences and ideas. I began to add elements to my paintings that have significance to me, like sunflowers, fields of crops, Native American spirits, and even bats. One painting, “Bats, Butterflies and the Wind,” took root in the death of my beloved cat, which I combined with ideas based on news articles about bats and butterflies becoming extinct due to global warming. That’s when I realized that painting is all about expressing an experience or idea on canvas, in short, telling a visual story. Thus, the wind paintings took on a life of their own.

My painting story isn’t finished yet. I’m still painting the wind!