



THE FREDERIC WHITAKER AND EILEEN MONAGHAN WHITAKER FOUNDATION

Translucent Visions – Frederic Whitaker and Eileen Monaghan Whitaker, A Retrospective in Watercolor, originated at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido on March 3rd, 2007. Curated by D. Scott Atkinson, Chief Curator and Curator of American Art, San Diego Museum of Art, the retrospective exhibit portrays each artist's vital engagement with color, form and light as well as with the emotional and historical contexts of daily life. Frederic Whitaker's work is luminous, whether he is painting industrial scenes, a winter landscape, or a New York City street. Eileen Monaghan Whitaker portrays the emotional layers of life's experiences, whether at play, at work, or in repose. Through the fluid transparency of watercolor, these two artists—the first husband-and-wife team at the National Academy of Art—captured between them more than 60 years of visual representation of people, place and historical circumstance.



"No form of art can have enduring success unless it appeals to the generality of people."
— Frederic Whitaker

Eileen Monaghan Whitaker and Frederic Whitaker supported and celebrated one another in life and in art for nearly forty years. Coming from vastly different backgrounds, they were a study in contrasts yet were united in their passion for the arts in general and the medium of watercolor in particular. Each contributed uniquely. For Eileen, people were a special source of inspiration. For Frederic, it was architecture. Both artists were also deeply inspired by nature and travel. They drew delight and inspiration from the cultures of the Southwest United States, Mexico, Guatemala and Spain. The landscapes of their daily lives were no less treasured. From New England to San Diego, their paintings capture the vitality of the places they called home.



*"I'm not concerned with the average person.
I must please myself."*
— Eileen Monaghan Whitaker

Their professional credentials are impeccable. Eileen Monaghan Whitaker (1911-2005) won her first award in her first competitive exhibition in 1948. She went on to receive 87 major awards for her paintings. She was elected to membership in the American Watercolor Society in 1953, and in 1957 to associate membership in the National Academy of Design, where she was elected full Academician in 1978. Throughout her career she was a frequent juror for competitive art exhibitions nationwide and is listed in *Who's Who in America* and *Who's Who in American Art*.

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History

Frederic Whitaker (1891-1980) was the recipient of more than 150 awards for his representational watercolors. In 1943, he organized Audubon Artists, Inc., an art society designed to represent all voices in the visual arts. He was an Academician in the National Academy of Design and served as president of the American Watercolor Society from 1949 to 1956. He served as officer and board member of numerous other national and regional art societies and was listed in a number of editions of *Who's Who*.

A nationally recognized author, Frederic Whitaker is often referred to as “Mr. Watercolor,” an unofficial title honoring both his award-winning paintings and his years of service to the cause of watercolor and watercolor painters. He exhibited widely and his paintings are in major museums nationwide, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.



The two artists met on Valentine’s Day, 1943 at a one-man exhibit of Frederic’s work at New York’s Ferargil Galleries. Their personal and creative partnership lasted until Frederic’s death in 1980. The rich extent of their lives and their work is featured in the book, *Contrasts That Complement—Eileen Monaghan Whitaker and Frederic Whitaker*, written by Jan Noreus Jennings, and published by Marquand Books in 2004.

After Frederic’s death, Eileen Monaghan Whitaker continued to paint prolifically. In 1982 she was commissioned by Copley Press to paint San Diego County. She explored the county for nearly four years, sketching, drawing, and photographing before completing the paintings in her La Jolla studio. The book, *Eileen Monaghan Whitaker Paints San Diego*, was published in 1986. In 1990, after extensive travels to Guatemala, Eileen Monaghan Whitaker had a one-person exhibit “Eileen Monaghan Whitaker: Watercolors of Guatemala and Mexico” at the Charles and Emma Frye Art Museum in Seattle, Washington. She painted until she was in her early-90s and continued as the head of the Frederic Whitaker and Eileen Monaghan Whitaker Foundation until her death in 2005.

The Whitaker Foundation was established as a non-profit arts foundation on October 28, 1987, to preserve and further the work of Eileen Monaghan Whitaker and Frederic Whitaker. This mission was later expanded to include the promotion of watercolor and watercolor artists in general. The Foundation trustees include Thomas G. Bush, President and Board Chair, nephew of Eileen Monaghan Whitaker. Other board members include: Brigitte M. Laxdal, Secretary/ Treasurer; Brunhilde Bush, First Vice President; and Patrick T. Bush, Vice President/ Design and Technology Manager.

Since 1965, Syracuse University in New York has held the Frederic Whitaker Manuscript Collection that now includes more than 100 paintings and documents. With Eileen’s death in September of 2005, the remainder of Frederic’s papers and other memorabilia, as well as the nucleus of Eileen’s life’s work, was donated to Syracuse University Library.

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