



Dynamic and Versatile

The American Watercolor Society celebrates art created in water media with its 159th Annual International Exhibition. By Chelsea Koressel

The mission behind the American Watercolor Society's *Annual International Exhibition* is simple: to celebrate excellence and innovation in water media by presenting the best paintings from artists around the world. The exhibition, now in its 159th edition, embraces a wide range of subjects and styles across 150 pieces, "honoring both the rich traditions of watercolor and its continued evolution

as a dynamic and versatile medium," says AWS president, Joel Popadics.

"I always look forward to seeing new works from artists in the United States whose careers I've followed and admired," Popadics continues. "At the same time, it's inspiring to see how watercolorists from other countries approach the medium, sharing their fresh perspectives, cultural influences and creative energy. I hope

collectors will appreciate the high level of craftsmanship and creativity on display, [and] that they'll leave with a renewed understanding of watercolor as a relevant and evolving medium."

For the 2026 exhibition, collectors will find wonderful examples like Michelle Nixon's watercolor, *Portrait of a Woman Fixing a Bathroom*. The image, depicting a child sitting in a sink, with eyes turned to the viewer, illustrates the artist's exploration of human connection.

"This piece considers competing expectations and responsibilities, and when they come to a head, particularly for women," the artist explains. "The image is playful yet edged with discomfort. There is a paradox in exploring that to bathe the child, the woman must provide a repaired bathing site, but working on that task means she has displaced her child into an improvised space. Taking time to care for this child has halted the progression of the repair. The tools are uncomfortably close to the child but out of reach. All this in the domestic backdrop of a kitchen. However, even in this time of competing tasks, there is a moment of pause. Because these harried moments gift us the reminders of why we engage in the tasks of living to begin with."

Artist Lorraine Watry focuses on a variety of subjects, brought to life in a realistic manner. "A theme of 'reflections' often





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Gallery view from
the 2025 exhibition.
Photo credit: Charity
Henderson Vince.

2
Harsh Agrawal,
Chelsea Nights,
watercolor, 10 x 14 in.

3
Lorraine Watry, *Fire
and Water*, watercolor,
18 x 28 in.

4
Michelle Nixon,
*Portrait of Woman
Fixing a Bathroom*,
watercolor, 20 x 28 in.

runs throughout my paintings, and I enjoy showing the beauty of light glinting off a hummingbird's feathers or the shine on a piece of antique glass," she says. We see this illustrated in Watry's watercolor show piece, *Fire and Water*, which was inspired by a visit to Florida's Jacksonville Zoo.

"I enjoy painting birds, especially when they are in the water and casting reflections on its shiny surface," says that artist. "The contrast of the bird's coral feathers against the cool blues of the water made me think of fire in the water. I took many reference shots that day, and combined a couple to [feature] dramatic splashes with movement in the bird's wings and feathers. I explored using granulating colors like Lunar Blue and Lunar Black in the water for added texture and interest. I have painted a series of flamingos now, and their form and beauty are exciting to explore."

The 159th Annual International Exhibition will be on view April 7 through May 1 in the Salmagundi Club's Skylight Gallery and the lower Rockwell Gallery in New York City. The event will also feature special programming including an opening reception on April 7 from 6 to 8 p.m.; a watercolor demonstration by Stephen Quiller on Thursday, April 30 at 6 p.m.; and an awards dinner on Friday, May 1, when 39 top awards will be presented to participating artists. The exhibition is free and open to the



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public, with some of the ancillary events requiring tickets.

After the New York show closes, 40 works from the exhibition will travel the United States for a year as part of the AWS *Traveling Exhibition*, allowing a broader audience to experience the magic of this highly acclaimed exhibition. ●

AMERICAN WATERCOLOR SOCIETY: 159TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION

April 7-May 1, 2026

Salmagundi Club, 47 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10003

www.americanwatercolorssociety.org