



Salt Marsh Rampike, acrylic on panel, 27" x 18"

## Life & Texture

written by Debra Usher

Brian LaSaga is an exceptional realism artist whose love of nature allows him to portray every nook and cranny of it in fine, high-definition detail. Nature is Brian's muse and just outside his door he finds endless images to capture in his paintings. He believes you should keep your mind open, explore and learn new things every day.

Brian was born in St. Teresa's, Newfoundland in 1955, and moved to St. George's, Nfld. at the

Brian doesn't paint real life but rather he paints life into the images on his masonite panels. He loves weathered and rustic objects with character – barnboards, rusted padlocks, driftwood – the texture and lines is their journey. "When you're a realist painter you are alone in your own little world," he says, "whether you are in your studio or not. Just you and the painting and all the details in your mind."

His own studio is very roomy – a comfortable loft with a great view from the second floor of a barn-style house. Brian lives in a small town and is surrounded by scenic natural landscape, so he doesn't have to wander far for inspiration.



Autumn Canopy, acrylic on panel, 15" x 23"

age of 10. "I guess you could say my journey as an artist began when I was very young," he says. "The work of Michelangelo and Vermeer had an impact on me as a budding artist. Later I was influenced by the work of Andrew Wyeth, Ken Danby, and Robert Bateman. I have always been a very visual person and with no formal training, art is more instinctual, full of discovery and experimentation which has continued with me today. Being true to myself, and being somewhat of a perfectionist, I have always remained faithful to realism and my imagery."

Weathered outdoor elements are among his favourite subjects to paint and he even keeps an old piece of driftwood around the corner from his studio where he can admire it anytime.

Brian's obsession with nature makes him want to show as much intimate detail in each painting as he can. "I am always trying to paint an emotional connection for the viewer in my paintings, allowing them to explore in the image before them. Each image occupies a place in the mind that might be real, or sometimes it is just a combination of the pieces of life around me."

Beach Bones, acrylic on panel, 18" x 27"



Brian LaSaga is a keen observer, forever keeping his eyes on nature and the imagery in front of him as it unfolds. As he puts it, "there is always a sense of discovery just around the corner and over the hill." He paints familiar experiences that are indigenous to his home area and tries to capture the pure and raw essence of the region and keep it sacred.

Light, shadow, form and composition are key elements in creating these crisp and clear images. Brian finds a certain mystery in nature

category. Another of Brian's paintings "Winter Woodpile" also received first place in the American Art Awards "Realism Landscape" category.

When asked to describe his process, Brian says, "Well it all starts when I head out with my 35mm Nikon camera. I gather more reference material than I need and I call this my homework. Although I'm taking photos, I'm still very aware of all the sights and sounds around me, as an artist's eye has not only to look but to see and constantly observe. I like to experience and



Entangled, acrylic on panel, 24" x 48"

and tries to convey it to the viewer in the details of his painting.

"What impresses me about other artists' work," Brian says, "is the complete simplicity. Meaning, achieving a finished result through hard work or not, but appearing effortlessly executed. The work of Peter Symonds and Ruo Li impresses me today. Also the work of the late Ken Danby I truly admire."

Just recently Brian's painting "Driftwood" was the grand prize winner in the International Artist Magazine "Landscape" competition in the February/March 2011 issue. This same painting also won first place in the American Art Awards "Realism Landscape with Figures"

enjoy the outdoors while collecting material for my work; rocks, feathers, shells, driftwood, rustic items and anything that catches my interest. This also serves as reference material for new works. Sometimes it takes anywhere from two to as many as a dozen images to create one painting. I play around with all possibilities until I arrive at a composition I'm happy with, then the real work begins – and ends after a month or two and sometimes longer."

Brian gets ready to paint by preparing the masonite panel. This involves cutting it to the required size, sanding it and then applying four to five coats of gesso with a paint roller. After this is dry, he sands the first layer. He usually works

Driftwood, acrylic on panel, 22" x 32"



Facing The Elements, acrylic on panel, 24" x 34"





Picket Fence, acrylic on panel, 14" x 20"

by thinking from background to foreground and not from top to bottom. The hardest thing about his art is facing the blank panel. "If there is a sky I always paint it first, until fully completed. I never try to cover the whole panel immediately. My process and way of thinking is that I will cross that bridge when I get to it."

In other words, he paints one specific area at a time. He also tries to leave out as much line drawing as possible and prefers to draw with his brush and paints. This allows him more control and freedom. "I would consider my technique a highly-controlled layer over layer visual blending technique," says Brian. "I've always pursued realism art, in the past I have explored, experimented and worked with watercolours, gouache, egg tempera and oils. I have painted on watercolour paper, canvas and illustration board, but my favourite medium today is acrylics on masonite panel. Panels offer me a nice rigid support. I also subscribe to the fact that it's not the necessarily the medium, but how one manipulates and uses it that matters in the end."

When not painting, Brian is either hiking and exploring, or kayaking and exploring and he has

some favourite destinations. "I make numerous trips in my kayak to Sandy Point, an island about two km across the bay from where I live. I enjoy exploring its coastline, laced with tangled driftwood and weathered breakwaters. When the tide is high I paddle through the nooks and crannies of its salt marshes. Sandy Point has been declared a bird sanctuary for many of the nesting birds that inhabit the island. The great blue heron, the northern harrier, and the piping plover, just to name a few. I also head out in my kayak to a place called Indian Head for inspiration. It's about seven km from my home, behind Sandy Point. It looks ancient and feels very eerie and spiritual. The many dangerous and beautiful rugged cliffs and rocks have a commanding presence and have earned my respect."

Nature is always showing off and Brian is quick to capture the imagery in his mind and with his camera. In particular, the coves and hills of Newfoundland always surprise and delight. One thing is for sure, with so much natural beauty in his sights, Brian LaSaga will never be far from his paint brushes.

To see more of Brian LaSaga's work visit him at [www.brianlasagarealism.com](http://www.brianlasagarealism.com)



Corner Refuge, acrylic on panel, 11" x 14"



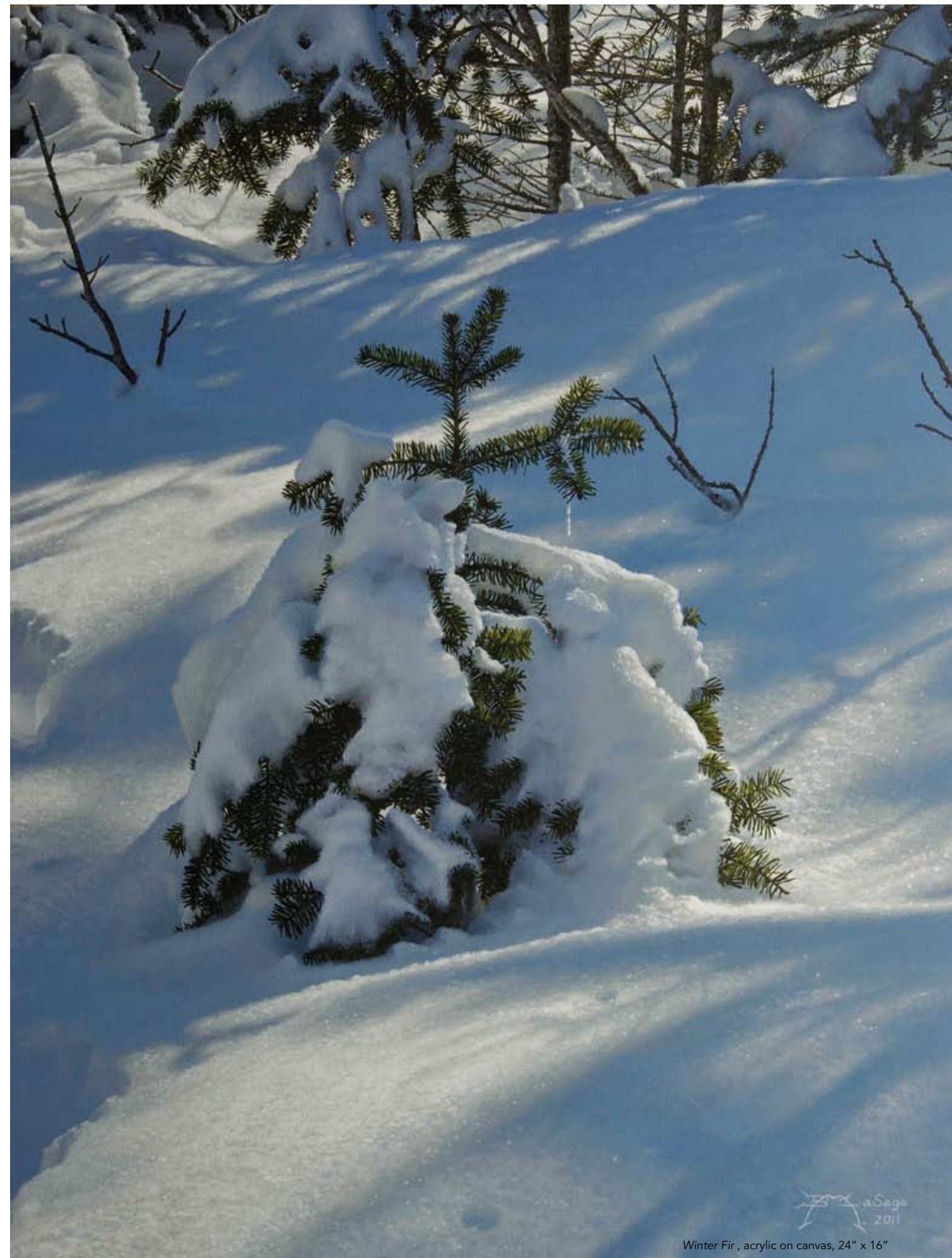
The Barn Door, acrylic on panel, 16" x 24"



After The Blizzard, acrylic on canvas, 16" x 26"



Winter Woodpile, acrylic on canvas, 16" x 24"



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Winter Fir, acrylic on canvas, 24" x 16"