



## SAVING OUR HISTORIC ART ONE PAINTING AT A TIME ANGELO BUSCEMI

One of the biggest lessons I learned as a collector and dealer of Early Wisconsin Artwork (1920-1950ish) is that you absolutely have to know a good conservator. Why? Because anything that's 75 – 100 years old, needs cleaning and probably some sort of repairs – at least once or twice, don't ya think?

Unless you purchase exclusively from galleries or dealers (who do most of that conservation work for you), 95% of what comes available probably needs attention. Paintings need cleaning, touch up, and attention to craquelure.

Old varnish needs to be removed, tears need patching, sometimes canvas needs to be restretched or relined.

Acidic mats must be replaced, frames may need repair or replacing.

Over the years, I've used a few different conservators, with differing results. Fortunately, I've got a local guy that is convenient, knowledgeable, skilled, and all around enjoyable to work with.

I'm sure he's cleaned at least 300 of my paintings over the years.

When the restoration is complete, and I get the call to come pick it up, I can't wait!

I'm like a kid at Christmas when I see that freshly restored and cleaned paintings all shiny and bright.

They usually look like think they were painted yesterday!

I think that this is almost exactly how the artist painted it originally and intended it to appear.

Colors are accurate, new details are often exposed, and subjects come to life!

And no one else has seen it this beautiful for a very long time. WOW!



"The River" by Henry Vianden, ca. 1890s - Before and After - Conservation and frame by Angelo Buscemi

Angelo is slowing down and not taking any new customers, but people need to know about this man, this artist! Not so much for what he can do for you, but what he has already accomplished - especially for Wisconsin Art!

This article is not intended to be much about conserving artwork.

Its about someone who has worked modestly, quietly and tirelessly saving and enhancing the Wisconsin Art scene.

(And always injecting his crazy sense of humor - and dad-like groaner jokes).

I know you care about presenting, and displaying art in its best light. If you care at all about Art History, and preserving Wisconsin's fine art, please take a few minutes to read about my friend, Angelo. Thank you!

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## A N A R T I S T I S B O R N

Angelo Buscemi was born in Rockford, IL in 1942. (Don't tell anyone, his birthday was last week.)

Angelo, or "Ang" as his friends call him, attended public school in his hometown, where he graduated high school. "Art was always my number one", said Angelo. "My entire life I knew I would go into Art, I enjoyed drawing and painting so much!" And, from an early age, he was quite successful too! In second grade he did a drawing of native Americans, earning a \$5 award! (he doesn't remember how he spent the money.) Clearly leaving a big impression, he rattled off the first and last names of his art teachers. Mrs. Theresa Jameston in Grade School. Mr. Paulin at Roosevelt Jr. High (he was REALLY fun). LuAnne Heine at West High.

Heck, I usually can't remember my own name!

At graduation, he earned an Art Scholarship – but couldn't accept it because he enlisted in the Navy.

So, Angelo packed up for active duty and reported to Great Lakes Boot Camp. His only apprehension about enlisting at the time, was leaving what he really wanted to do (art), and who he really cared about (his prom queen girlfriend) Sally. Boot Camp was only 3-4 weeks. He reflects back on how young he was, and vividly remembers washing his clothes by hand and hanging them to dry.

After boot camp Angelo was deployed to Washington D.C. for a couple weeks. While there, he stood watch duty over President Kennedy's presidential yacht "The Honey Fitz". During his free time, he would head to the Phillips Art Museum, and sit in on lectures when possible! What followed during this Cold War period were assignments to

Florida, and the Naval Air Station Oceana in Virginia. Then he served for two years on a destroyer stationed at Norfolk Virginia. At sea for three months with 360 seaman, Angelo became a frequently requested barber!





Then on to the USS Dewey, one of America's first guided missile destroyers. It was a very tense time in a volatile region. They were part of the Cuban Blockade, but never saw active duty or battle – just drills – lots and lots of drills. When on shore leave, Angelo always sought out the art, visiting Art Museums, the Sistine Chapel and Pieta among other places.

After service ended. Angelo took three impressive letters of recommendation with him. He went home to Rockford to work construction for a summer and earn money to pursue training at The Layton School of Art in Milwaukee. Over 3,000 students applied each year, but only 90 students were accepted. Angelo was accepted in 1965 when tuition cost about \$700/semester. The GI Bill paid \$130/month, so he worked on campus doing mostly janitorial services, trash and snow removal, etc. By this time he was older than most students, so he lived off campus.

I don't have room to include all the colorful stories he's shared over the years ... well, here's one ...

Ed Lewandowski was Layton's President at the time. One of his perks was a penthouse on the top floor for Ed's wife and Ed's father, Frank (and Frank's dog).

One icy wintery day, Frank Lewandowski got hit by a car walking to/from home.

Angelo witnessed the accident and rushed to his rescue! The next day, Lewandowski got Angelo out of class and took him to the hospital. It seemed that Frank wanted to see Angelo, and thank him for his "heroic assistance"!

(way to go, Angelo, but you should have asked Ed for a painting!)

He also remembers cleaning up after the frequent, notoriously raucous faculty parties held in the school gallery. Beverages flowed freely, and they would go late into the early morning. Ang named names, and shared detailed stories, but I'm not going to be the one to tarnish historic reputations here!

Just a few of Angelo's professors include Robert von Neumann, Ed Lewandowski, Orville Soffa, Myron Kozman, Herald Huber, Jack White, Walter Scheffer, and others.

Angelo graduated in 1969, first working at an advertising agency for a few months, and in 1970 he joined Milwaukee Moulding & Frame (MM&F) on north Water Street. MM&F opened for business in 1918 with a German-

made table saw. Angelo would spend his next 42 years there! At its peak, MM&F employed 13 people and built a world-wide reputation! Never advertising, their client list included major Museums and Auction Houses.

MM&F was also the preferred framer for local artists and students. Early Wisconsin artists like Joe Friebert, Fred Berman, John Earnest, etc. would purchase raw mouldings and construct their own frames. Artists like Guido Brink, Emily Groom, Ida Ozonoff, Warrington Colescott, Sr. Thomasita, Harold Altman, Hulda Rotier Fischer, Karl Priebe, Clarence Boyce Monegar, John Colt, Max Fernekes, Francesco and Sylvia Spicuzza, Bob and Nancy Ekholm Burkert, and others brought in thousands of prints, photographs, and paintings to be professionally framed.

Having been a student and framer for so many notable Early Wisconsin artists, Angelo tells stories about them-

always with a smile and chuckle. And, I absolutely love hearing his tales.

I encourage the inside scoops and colorful dirt – which I should have been videotaping.

I love knowing more about the artists, strive to understand their personalities, quirks, habits, talents - the REAL person and character behind these Wisconsin legends!

Every time Angelo talks about Robert von Neumann, its as if he can still hear von Neumann speaking.

Angelo's voice now includes a bad German accent, “Looshin’ up Angelo, Looshin’ up”!

(Referring to his painting technique, of course.)

Angelo could perform almost every function at MM&F. Customer service, ordering, framing, matting, etc. Customers brought in large quantities of paintings and works of art on paper - old and new. But more and more, to Angelo’s trained eye, he recognized that customers needed cleaning and conservation work too.

At first, he would just do minor repairs and even touch up work without being asked by the customers.

He just wanted to make them happy, and give them the very best product possible.

Having an art degree was helpful, but doing conservation work required further knowledge and skills. He read all the books he could find, talked to other conservators, and taught himself ... one painting at a time. Realizing he was now providing a much-needed - and often requested service - he started doing the conservation work on his own at home as a little side job.

Angelo went on to be a co-owner and President of MM&F until they closed the doors in 2018.

The company had run its course with just two employees remaining. Angelo and his partner Tom Deer had achieved their goal of keeping the company in business for 100 years!

<https://www.jsonline.com/story/money/business/retail/2018/12/20/after-100-years-milwaukee-moulding-frame-close-shop/2376056002/>



If you have an older piece of art hanging on your walls, odds are pretty good that it has a Milwaukee Moulding

Label on the back!

Angelo may have framed it, and proudly mentions he's framed a lot of other valuable things too, including sports jerseys, guns and knives, arrow heads, polo mallets, Olympic torches, and even human hair!

Special kudos to all conservators and framers out there doing the same.





Angelo still does limited conservation work in the basement of his Wauwatosa home which he shares with his wife, Val and their cat. They are both major Bucks - but not Packers - fans.

A major flaw, probably attributable to his "south-of-the-cheese-curtain" upbringing.

He works with a few of his regular customers, but sorry, he's not taking any new clients.

Over the years, he's filled his home with a beautiful art collection too – all perfectly conserved of course.





Ang has been restoring artwork for over 50 years now!

His extensive knowledge and diverse experience has made him a true “Art Consultant”.

Customers and collectors seek Angelo’s opinion as they consider new artwork investments for themselves!



What Angelo has done for me is truly invaluable - his services, history lessons, and friendship.

What Angelo has done for Wisconsin Art is nothing but remarkable.

He's a degreed art scholar who creates masterpieces and practices his art daily.

He's a modest art consultant, promoter and collector of some of Wisconsin's finest.



He lovingly cleans, conserves, restores and preserves, matts and frames artwork for the future 100 years.

Thousands, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of pieces – literally. Wisconsin Art.

Thank you, Angelo!



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\*\*\*Footnote:

I have to inject here, that Angelo is a big time kidder. More times than not, he leads me down some colorful road, only to find out that he's pulling my leg. So, for what it's worth, I honestly think all the information contained is truthful. But you can decide which facts are truly factual, and if any are simply for colorful embellishment.

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# STILL TIME FOR SANTA

Art is still the very best Christmas Gift - for yourself, or your loved ones,

something new, colorful and bright,

something mid-century, trendy, and popular,

or something historic and older-than-the-hills,

Time to fill your empty walls and frames with beautiful artwork by these Wisconsin Artists!

Inventory changes quickly, so check back often!

**EARLY AND HISTORIC LINKS IN BOLD CAPS**, Contemporary Artists links in regular weight font.

Chuck Bauer

**AARON BOHROD**

Christine Buth-Furness

**JOHN COLT**

Patrick Doughman

Gwen Granzow

**EMILY GROOM**

**RUTH GROTENRATH**

**SCHOMER LICHTNER**

Valerie Mangion

**DEAN MEEKER**

**CLARENCE BOYCE MONEGAR**

**MARY NOHL**

Jack Pachuta

Liz Phillips

Jewell Riano-Bradley



[Janet Roberts](#)

[Mary Ellen Sisulak](#)

[Colette Ody Smith](#)

[FRANCESCO SPICUZZA](#)

[LUCIA STERN](#)

[ARTHUR THRALL](#)

[Mark Weller](#)

[Darlene Wesenberg Rzezotarski](#)

[ROBERT VON NEUMANN](#)

[PAUL YANK](#)

[SANTOS ZINGALE](#)

[and lots and lots more!](#)

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## THANK YOU

Customers, collectors, artists, estates, consignors, friends, and others...

thank you for your tremendous support!

We help artists connect with collectors, and collectors find rare and hard-to-find gems.

We promote Wisconsin art of all periods, educate, and are a valuable and growing resource of information.

We welcome your participation. There are plenty of opportunities to get involved!

(Check out the website under the SUBMISSIONS Tab)

And if you're just looking to kill some time, please browse our [GALLERY COLLECTION](#) section.

Its what we collect, and hold dear, for reference, information, and artist promotion. Viewing only - but not for sale.

**Our Mission is to find homes that value historic Wisconsin artwork in todays growing art market.**

From all over the country, we receive artwork that previous owners "want to return home to Wisconsin". The Gallery has one of the largest collections of Wisconsin artwork - especially paintings - 1920 - 1950ish. We purchase exceptional pieces for the Gallery Collection as well as a growing network of collectors. Let us know if you want to sell a family heirloom - or - if you want to purchase work by a specific artist. When work comes available, we will notify you! And you are always welcome to view it in person.

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## SUPPORT AND SHARE

As an online Gallery, we rely heavily on word-of-mouth, web searches and quality information. GOWA has excellent web traffic, and when searching for our artists, collectors find them easily! We welcome any biographical information and artists photos that help expand our historic database! But the biggest gift - and compliment you can give - is to share, forward, and tell your friends, fellow artists and collectors about the Gallery of Wisconsin Art.

Would you please help spread the word?



## Gallery of Wisconsin Art

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414-630-3600

[www.GalleryOfWisconsinArt.com](http://www.GalleryOfWisconsinArt.com)

The Gallery of Wisconsin Art is the only Gallery that promotes early (1900-1960ish), historic Wisconsin artists including Regional, Rural, American Scene, WPA, impressionist and modernist works. *Additionally*, we represent a wide selection of work by some of Wisconsin's finest Contemporary Artists. Gallery mission is about preservation, education, awareness, and networking. Our goal is to bring artists, buyers, and collectors together, and find new homes for quality, older artwork. We buy and sell important and collectable artwork by exceptional, early 20th century Wisconsin artists!

Thank You for Supporting Wisconsin Artists!

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