

e-gallery number13

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Quick thumbnail sketches for the sake of color options as the photo material was black and white. Oil, 4.5"x7"
Sometimes these tiny renditions reveal a vitality and inspiration that make them finished paintings in themselves.

Zora Neale Hurston . . .

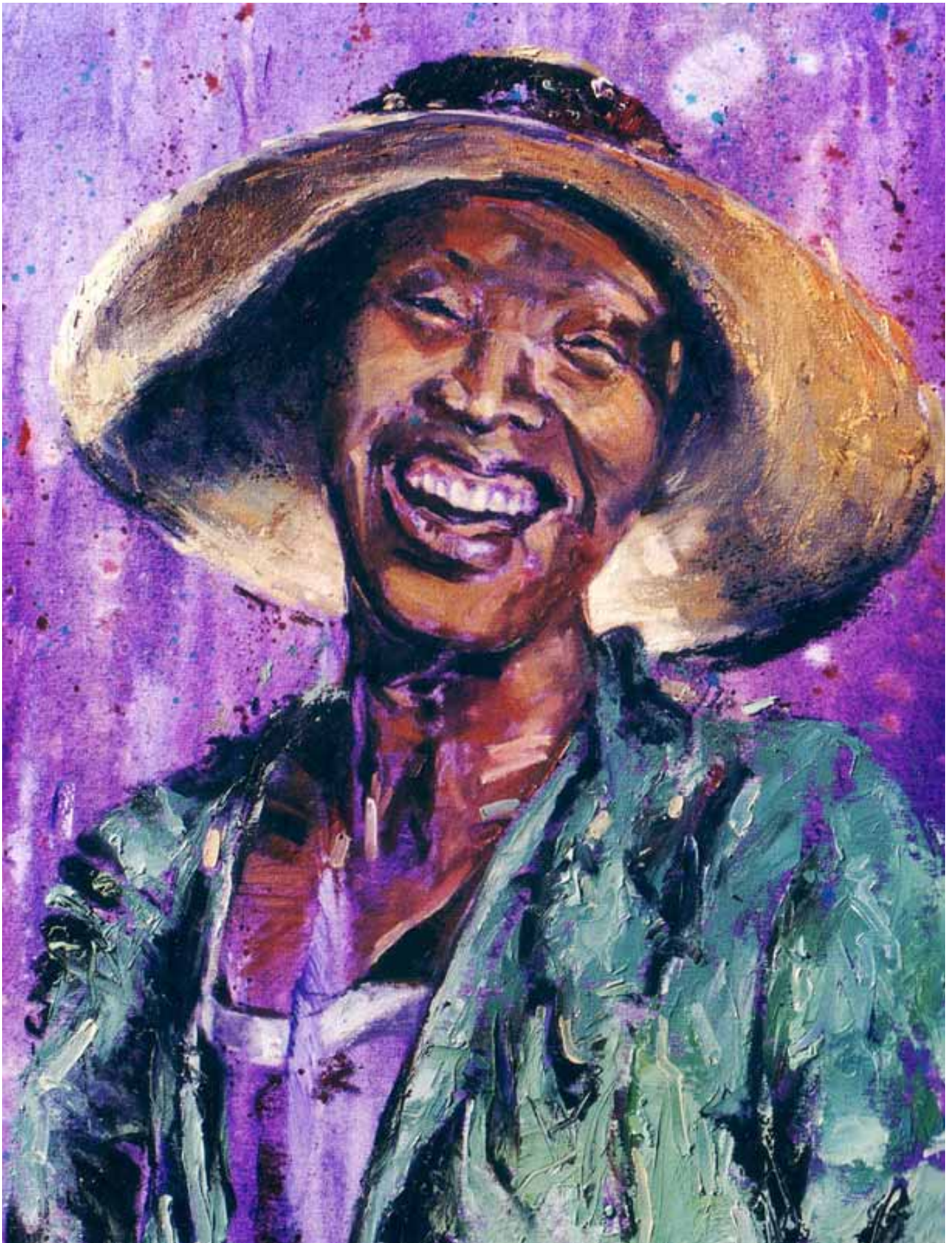
is a person I'd not known, though my kids read her work in college. With a larger-than-life personality and a freedom of spirit, she was a literary great of a generation back. Though her mind was wealthy, she died poor, her body buried in an unmarked grave, her manuscripts only saved by a landlord because, "Heck, she wrote all this...might as well keep it somewhere." Her since-published book, *Their Eyes were Watching God*, has become a modern classic, as well as a list of other works.

It was a year ago I was commissioned by Eagle Productions in Orlando to do a painting of Hurston. Eagle was preparing a documentary to ultimately air on PBS, a project still in the works. Finding material from which to work was the first challenge. Photos of her are rare. There is one that was featured on a postage stamp that came out last year, but I opted for another owned by the Library of Congress that gave me a full figure to work with, and a smile as wide as the camera lens.



As it's turned out, the photo we chose to work from has since been contested by someone recently writing a book on Hurston. Eagle Productions has located and visited the original photographer, a very old man now and often not in a frame of mind to hunt through his spill of long-ago snap shots, so the mystery remains. The Library of Congress has now at least put a question mark next to their listing. Whether the painting will see light of PBS day is yet to be seen. Meantime, Eagle Productions owns a painting of one very vital, lively, majestic woman. Her smile is all over the following page.

Zora Neale Hurston
oil on canvas
60"x27"



I literally got down on my knees and prayed before I did those teeth—often the hardest to paint without ruining everything, but for her, makes her who she is.

Slevcove Brothers

Here was a fun commission. Jim Slevcove (far left) is the youngest of five brothers...sons of a Russian immigrant to Los Angeles. He says when his father first came the only ones who would help him were the Jews...who knew what it was like to be adrift in the world and needing a friend. Anyway, Jim wanted a memory to give to his oldest brother (far right), now aging. So he brought me this photo taken 10 years ago on a trip to Catalina. It was his idea to get them up in cowboy duds. It was mine to make oldest brother the sheriff. Needless to say the presentation was a great hit, with prints made for all the rest, and their children besides.



Slevcove Brothers, oil on canvas, 24"x36"

A Few Still Lives for the Kitchen



These just for fun, from whatever's in season, and will sit still in the studio. *Pear, Apple, Orange*, oil, 6"x15"



Four Onions, Oil, 7.5"x14"



Two Lemons, Orange, Lime, 6"x11"

From Drawing to Painting

Speaking of sitting still, whenever I can I attend an evening of figure drawing, along with whatever other artists show up and a model. They say it's the greatest practice an artist can have to learn from the human form, generally unclothed, with all the anatomy right there, allowing no way to hide mistakes under folds of clothes. They can be one-minute poses for quick gestures to 10 and 20-minutes, or longer for more detail and rendering. It's a challenge, and generally enjoyable (depending on how the results are coming). The problem is, even when they're good, it can be a little discomfoting showing those results to another. (Wife Anne is always curious to see who I've been drawing.) One evening recently the model ended the session donning a costume, a white kimono and even a black wig. I was pleased with the 20-minute sketch and later traced it on canvas to see what kind of painting it would make. Earliest stages revealed a good design so I quit, letting the simple color shapes be the painting. Later I did another, different colors and more detailed. One could go on and on...



Julia in Kimono, charcoal on paper, 24"x18"



Julia in Kimono, No. 1, oil on canvas, 24"x18"



Julia in Kimono, No. 2, oil on canvas, 24"x18"

Pismo Beach, oil on canvas, 12"x31"



Pismo Beach

Well, we've had portraits and figures and still lifes in this e-gallery, we might as well close it out with a landscape. Or is it a seascape? Maybe it's neither, technically. It's Pismo Beach along the central coast of California, seen from the hills above. And while we're on the subject of town paintings, **Street Workers** (below) is from a conglomerate of photos taken across my own street. It was the morning of a hot day and these men were hard at it. I was impressed, and painted the tribute just because. And that's a good enough reason to do a lot of things. Have a good month.



Street Workers, oil on canvas, 16.5"x30.5"