

# **“The Importance of Floating...and other Lessons”**

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**Gallery 1581**

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The title of this show requires some explanation.

Since I started painting, I have concentrated on land and seascapes. Painting initially on site, trying to capture that which is occurring at any given moment in time, and finishing work in the studio, has been my process. This summer, when faced with a 36x48 surface, I made the decision to paint from a different perspective. Instead of the “here and now”, I painted from a memory of an event. The act of painting a subject not physically present, and also from an event that occurred four decades ago, caused me to go deeper within myself for answers and solutions to painting than previously.

The painting is about the summer day at the beach when I nearly drowned. Many of us have had that experience. My memory of the event is, of course, unique. An undertow or rip current (I honestly do not know which), caught many swimmers unaware that day. I remember hearing people yelling for help. When a grown man not far from me, started screaming, I had a split second of panic myself. Fortunately, not only was I a strong swimmer, but because I had swimming lessons at a young age, I remembered the instruction: “just lie on your back and float.”

Floating made all the difference in my being here to paint about it, and the way I experienced an otherwise horrific event. After it was all over, I was told that in those situations, we either panic, or we regress and relax. I chose regression. It saved my life.

My memory of the day was influenced by my state of mind. It was beautiful. I was so far out that I couldn't see any land. In my line of vision, I saw only sky and water and the curvature of the earth. The sun was shining and the water and everything around me was sparkling. If I think about it, I actually smile.

A life guard risked his own life to rescue me, and we had a treacherous swim to a rope tow. I was in a state of shock all day exhibiting a bemused attitude about the whole thing. The next morning, upon awakening, I sat straight up in bed, the full realization of how close I had come to tragedy, upon me.

It was a challenge for me to paint from the viewpoint of being in the water, and quite honestly, feeling “of” the water. I wanted to capture the beauty and the light of the day and at the same time, exhibit the depth and the buoyancy of the ocean. As soon as I was finished with this painting, I immediately produced two more versions of the event.

Painting from this memory has unleashed what seems like now to be an endless trove of possibility. The implications of “floating” are manifold, but for purposes of this brief explanation, I will keep it simple. I learned my lesson...I am going with it.