

## **Reaction to the Gary Kelley Lecture July 21, 2009**

West Hartford Session  
UNIVERSITY OF HARTFORD  
Limited Residency MFA in Illustration



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8.23.2009

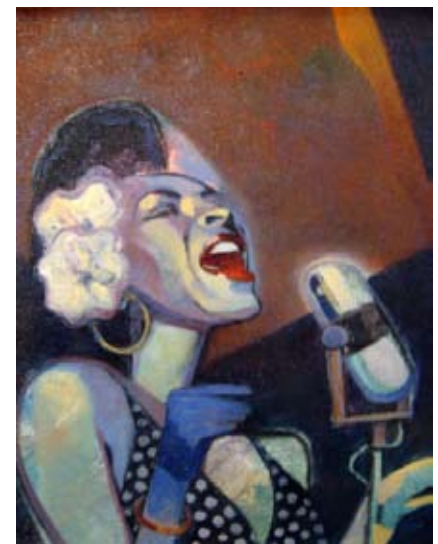
Illustrator Gary Kelley (b.1945) of Cedar Falls Iowa gave me an artistic vigorous shake to the shoulders. His painter's approach to a world of commercial jobs showed me that I can continue to pursue my spectrum of artistic interests without locking into a "style for life".

Gary's schooling in painting and drawing at the University of Northern Iowa grounded him with paramount concerns of composition and color relationships. His appreciation for expressionistic painters is still tempered by the foundations learned from his youth in illustrations by Robert Weaver (1924 -1994) and the illustration books by Andrew Loomis (1892 -1959); Creative Illustration, Figure Drawing for All It's Worth, Successful Drawing, etc...

While Gary developed a personal sense of surface treatment, the raw foundations of his compositions were solidly rooted within the principles of design and movement. He developed a tempering of the desire to solely play color and texture off each other within an armature of dynamic line work



*Theatre UNI*, 1981  
Gary Kelley  
Pastel



*Billy Holiday, Jazz Divas Series*, 2003  
Gary Kelley  
Pastel, 11 x 11 inches

*"And through it  
all the ghost of  
Pierre Bonnard  
is whispering  
in my ear,  
"Composition is  
everything".  
- Gary Kelley,*

1. Retrieved August 8, 2009 from The Hudson River Gallery & Frame Co. 538 S. GILBERT ST, IOWA CITY, IA 52240  
GARY KELLEY - THE NINE MUSES - JANUARY 23- FEBRUARY 28 2009 [HTTP://WWW.HUDSONRIVERGALLERY.COM/GARYKELLEY/INDEX.HTML](http://www.hudsonrivergallery.com/GARYKELLEY/INDEX.HTML)

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Kelley has an affinity to the early 20th C. - it's methods and themes. I noticed his personal disdain for the computer and it's ability to create images. I find it to be a dichotomy, since many of the artists he respects were on the cutting edge of technique and often rebelling against the established academic methods of creating art.

living within the natural world, figuratively, contextually and easy to understand. This seeming ease at settling upon the core theme of an illustration is often toiled labor in the sketch-stages, and hard negotiations with art directors. Kelley will thumbnail a piece repeatedly to be sure the message is apparent, the focus is clear and the dynamics of design are eye pleasing.

I was also drawn to the Loomis books after finding a first edition of *Creative Illustration* in a \$5 pile at a library sale while I was still in art school. Loomis laid the principle of picture making and story telling in a concise and logical approach - Line, Composition, Color, Story Telling, Creating Ideas, Outlets and Experimentation. The Loomis methods of illustration are echoed in Kelley's own approach and teaching style. Kelley's pastel technique demonstration of July 19th showed me how basic and studied these principles are. The basic line work foundation was rock solid. The eye was led, halted, then pulled another direction as successfully as a Franz Kline (1910-



*The Green Fairy*, 2008  
Gary Kelley  
Monotype



*Four Color Studies*, p. 157  
*Creative Illustration*  
Andrew Loomis, The Viking Press  
1947



Untitled, 1950  
 Franz Kline  
 Ink on paper  
 9 1/4 x 7 1/4 inches  
 Chisties, NY  
 Post-War and Contemporary Art  
 Morning Session,  
 11 November, 2004.  
 Lot 117 Catalog 1432  
 page 25

"Draw your  
 pleasure  
 -paint your  
 pleasure  
 -express your  
 pleasure..."

-Pierre  
 Bonnard  
 (1867-1947)

1962) painting. The dynamics of surface movement were considered as carefully as the story the artist was trying to convey. The initial minutes one spends hashing out a strong lineal design allows the value and color to work on top of a strong composition.

Within the broader artist journey, Kelley has always been about conveying a crystal clear idea or message in his work. He has never lost the sub-definition of "illustrator" within the broader definition of "artist". His approach to the subject



Carafe, Marthe Bonnard with Her Dog. 1912-15  
 Pierre Bonnard  
 Oil on canvas



Three Women, 1908  
 Pablo Picasso  
 Oil on canvas  
 The Hermitage, St. Petersburg, Russia



La Musique, 1939  
 Henri Matisse  
 Oil on canvas, 45 1/4 x 45 1/4 inches  
 Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo NY

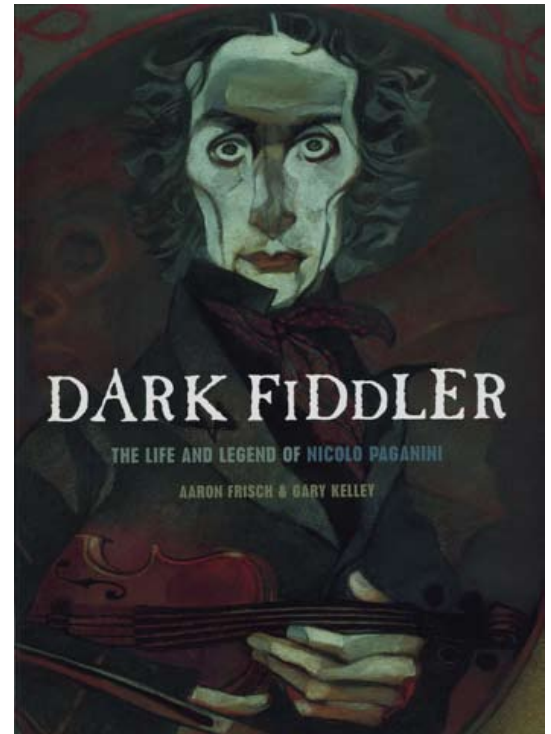


*Self Portrait Standing*, 1910  
Egon Schiele  
Pencil and Watercolor,  
22 x 14 1/2 in  
Graphische Sammlung Albertina,  
Vienna

is often a gut level idea/reaction to the subject at hand; the contortionist's form of the Paganini spread in his picture book, the *Dark Fiddler*, echoing Egon Schiele to the homage of Matisse in his *Venus Bringer of Peace* composition. Kelley switches surface treatments, drawing style and execution as the subject dictates often channeling a artist he admires.

The ability to balance the core dynamics of picture making with the impact of good story telling are strengths that Kelley wields masterfully. The imagery is never hampered by the content, nor is the story muddled by design elements. The issues of structure, contrast and leading the viewer are handled in the earliest stages of the composition. The choice of pallet will often reflect the color sense of an artist or particular piece in art history. Kelley's choice of medium is chosen for it's desired finish or time constraint.

“Stylistically, I can't ignore the influence of my heros from a century ago. They are post-impressionists like Matisse (1869



*Dark Fiddler*, 2008  
Gary Kelley  
Pastel on Stonehenge Paper



*LaSalle National*, 1996  
Gary Kelley  
Pastel on Stonehenge Paper

-1954), Bonnard (1867 -1947), and Picasso (1881 - 1973). I also can't resist the occasional twist; Botticelli's Venus reborn in the trenches of Verdum or Titian's Venus titillating the Duke of Ellington. Or perhaps a bit of provocation for the viewer to imagine his or her own scenario in response to a contemporary Venus enjoying her bath or missing her lover.”<sup>2</sup>

The medium of choice tends to be chosen by the desired finish. Kelley works on a number of surfaces, textures and vehicles, but keeps the main elements of strong page design and the need to guide the viewer's eye through the piece is across the medium platform. The boundaries seem to be only what he chooses to be halted by.



*The use of the iconic Venus among the warriors has a similarity, but entirely different feel of Eugene Delacroix's (1798 - 1863) "Liberty Leading the People" of 1830.*

*Both represent a bloody conflict in France, but one encourages battle, the other peace.*



Venus, The Bringer of Peace, 2006  
Gary Kelley  
Oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches

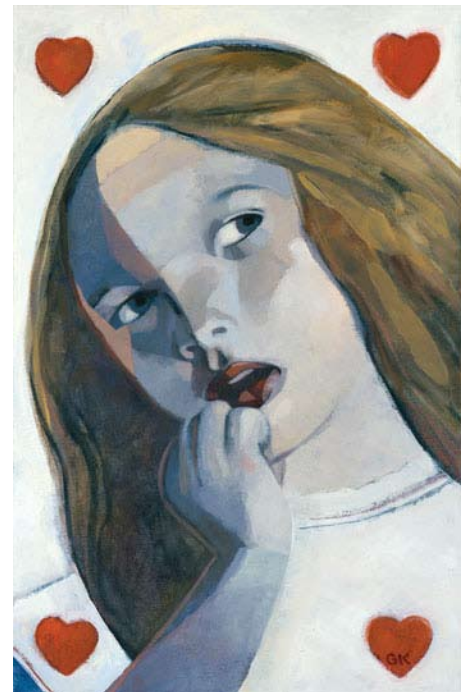
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*Venus and the Duke*, 2006  
Gary Kelley  
Oil on canvas, 18 x 40 inches

**The ability to apply lessons learned from artists in the past, while retaining his own unique voice has allowed Kelley to forge timeless, but fully modern imagery on canvas and paper, both published and personal. Kelly is as much a spirit of the past as he is of the here and now.**

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*Alice*, 2007  
Pastel on Stonehenge Paper  
Gary Kelley