

John Lautermilch



P O R T F O L I O

Edited by G. Symes
All artwork by and photos
courtesy of John Lautermilch

John Lautermilch, an award-winning American artist from Saint Louis, Missouri, and graduate of the Washington University School of Fine Arts, has created paintings for 60 years, which have been shown in numerous solo exhibitions and include commissions for individual collectors and institutions. Among his plethora of paintings of the natural world are artworks featuring vivid and dynamic underwater scenes with divers and coral reefs. *X-Ray Mag* interviewed the artist to learn more about his creative process and perspectives.

X-RAY MAG: Tell us about yourself, your background and how you became an artist.

JL: I knew I wanted to be an artist from the time I was five years old. I was in love with the visual



Lost World, by John Lautermilch. Oil on canvas panel, 18 x 24in (45.7 x 61cm). PREVIOUS PAGE: *Spotlight on Creation*, by John Lautermilch. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40in (76.2 x 101.6cm)





Lautermilch

The Flow of Creation,
by John Lautermilch.
Oil on stretched
canvas, 36 x 48in
(91.5 x 122cm)

world, but I also enjoyed the compliments my drawings elicited from my parents and others. And so I continued to draw and paint throughout my childhood. I eventually went to a prominent university in the city of Saint Louis and studied art exclusively. My hope was to make a living as a non-commercial artist, but it was not meant to be. Therefore, I was compelled to take jobs in the commercial world, creating artwork for shoe advertisements, corporate publications, and children's books with religious themes. But I am now retired, so I have all the time in the world to paint only what I want, without needing to make a living from my artwork.

X-RAY MAG: Why marine life and underwater themes? How did you come to these themes and how did you develop your style of painting?

JL: I have always been interested in the beauty of the natural world, no matter where that beauty happens to be found. And there is of course plenty of it to be found in the ocean. In many ways, the beauty underwater is more





Swimming with the Dolphins, by John Lautermilch. Oil on stretched canvas, 36 x 48in (91.5 x 122cm)

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X-RAY MAG: What are your thoughts on ocean conservation and coral reef management and how does your artwork relate to these issues?

JL: I am deeply worried about the future of our oceans. It is clear that our current path is not sustainable. I think the more people are exposed to the endless beauty of the underwater world, the more likely they are to cherish it and want to preserve it.

X-RAY MAG: What is the message or experience you want viewers of your artwork to have or understand?

JL: I mostly want viewers to simply derive pleasure from my artwork. But if it also inspires them to be more environmentally conscious, that would be extremely gratifying.

X-RAY MAG: What are the challenges or benefits of being an artist in the world today? Any

thoughts or advice for aspiring artists in ocean arts?

JL: Perhaps the biggest challenge of being an artist in today's world is competing for attention with the endless stream of videos, articles, music, social media posts, etc., that nearly everyone now has access to. To break through all of that requires not only great talent but also healthy self-promotion on every possible platform.

exotic and otherworldly than the beauty we experience in our everyday lives on land. Observing the aquatic world is akin to visiting another planet. The colors are breathtaking.

X-RAY MAG: Who or what has inspired you and your artwork and why? Which mentors, artists, art styles or movements have influenced your artistic vision, creative process and development of your artwork?

JL: Though I have dabbled in many different styles over the decades, I am mostly a traditionalist, in both technique and

subject matter. I mostly paint the natural world in a realistic and impressionistic vein. And my favorite artists did as well: Rembrandt, Vermeer and Monet.

X-RAY MAG: What is your artistic method or creative process?

JL: I am inspired to paint whenever I encounter beauty, whether I am fortunate enough to witness that beauty firsthand or only in photos and videos. Once I decide on the subject matter, I collect relevant photos of it. I then draw an outline of what I want to paint, sometimes going through

multiple drafts. Once the outline is satisfactory, I begin painting, laying down the background colors first. My preferred mediums are acrylic and oil paints.

X-RAY MAG: What is your relationship to the underwater world and coral reefs? Are you a scuba diver or a snorkeler and how have your experiences underwater influenced your art?

JL: Unfortunately, I have never been scuba diving and have only been snorkeling once. Therefore, my underwater paintings are inspired by the photos and videos of others.



Playing with the Sea Turtles, by John Lautermilch. Oil on canvas, 30 x 40in (76.2 x 101.6cm)





Lautermilch

In Search of The Creator,
by John Lautermilch.
Oil on canvas, 36 x 48in
(91.5 x 122cm)

X-RAY MAG: How do people—adults and children—respond to your works?

JL: Generally speaking, people respond positively to the artwork. The natural world is of interest to everyone. The most memorable reaction was a woman who was so moved by a painting of water lilies that she began crying while viewing it.

X-RAY MAG: What are your upcoming projects, art courses or events?

JL: At my overly ripe age of 81, I do not do many events anymore. Normally, I put on an annual exhibit of my recent paintings at a nearby gallery. However, I will not be able to do so this year because of the coronavirus.

X-RAY MAG: Lastly, is there anything else you would like to tell our readers about yourself and your artwork?

JL: Only this: I hope they like it. ■

For more information or to buy originals and prints, please visit the artist's websites at: artpal.com/jlart#i9 or fineartamerica.com/profiles/john-lautermilch.

