



How to Commission an Oil Painting

By Erin Hanson

THERE ARE many reasons why you might want to approach an artist for a commissioned painting. You might have a specific wall in your home that needs an odd-sized painting. You may be looking for the perfect color palette in an interior design scheme. You may want to commemorate a special moment or a special landscape, perhaps as a gift for a loved one.

When I create a commission, I like to work from photographs that my collectors themselves have taken. They do not need to be fancy, professional photographs—I can make magic out of ordinary phone snapshots.

TIPS FOR TAKING PHOTOS ON YOUR PHONE FOR A COMMISSION:

The best light for landscape phone photography is early morning or late afternoon. When the sun is low on the horizon, shadows on trees and rocks and mountains add dimension to the



*Sedona, Arizona
reference photograph
used for Sedona Vista
painting above.*

photograph, which makes it easier to translate into a painting. The light during this “golden hour” is softer and warmer, which makes the landscape look more beautiful (as opposed to the harsh white light of noon.)

Here is a tip for photographing beautiful sunsets: take one photo of the sky and clouds, then aim

downward and take a separate photo of the foreground. This keeps the foreground from looking too dark in the photograph. You can also take the foreground picture a little earlier in the day, and I can combine the two photos in the painting.

If I have visited the location myself, I can work from my own photos, like

in this commission I did of Sedona, Arizona, to commemorate a couple's honeymoon (*Sedona Vista*, opposite).

While I use photos as references, I create my own interpretation of the landscape. My goal is to go beyond the photo and recapture the magic that made you pick up your camera in the first place.

When you start thinking about your commission, you should have an idea of what sort of frame you want for your piece. The type of frame you want will determine the canvas I will use. For example, if you want a floater frame, I will paint on 1½" stretched canvas. A plein air-style frame would require me to paint on linen board or ¾" canvas.

The next thing to consider is size. Where is the painting going to hang? I recommend taking blue painter's tape and marking out different sizes on the wall. You can visualize the size better and view the wall from different angles around the house. Remember to include the size of the frame when you are marking out your dimensions.

Color might be the next thing to consider. If you have any favorite colors, please let me know. (If you want to avoid any colors, please let me know too!) It is helpful for me to have a photograph of the room before I begin painting, so I can be sure my work of art will look great in the space.

I often create a small "painting sketch" of the commission before I begin painting, so I can be sure we are all on the same page and I understand what is desired in the finished piece.

When the painting is completed, I will photograph the piece and email the photo to you for approval. My goal is to transform an ordinary photograph into an impressionistic masterpiece that captures the beauty and joy of the moment.



ABOVE: Painting sketch and an example of masking-out sizes.



SAGUARO SUNSET

Commissioned oil painting
38.5 x 57 in



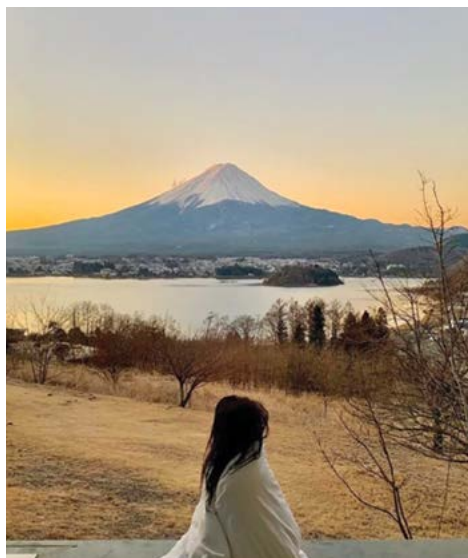
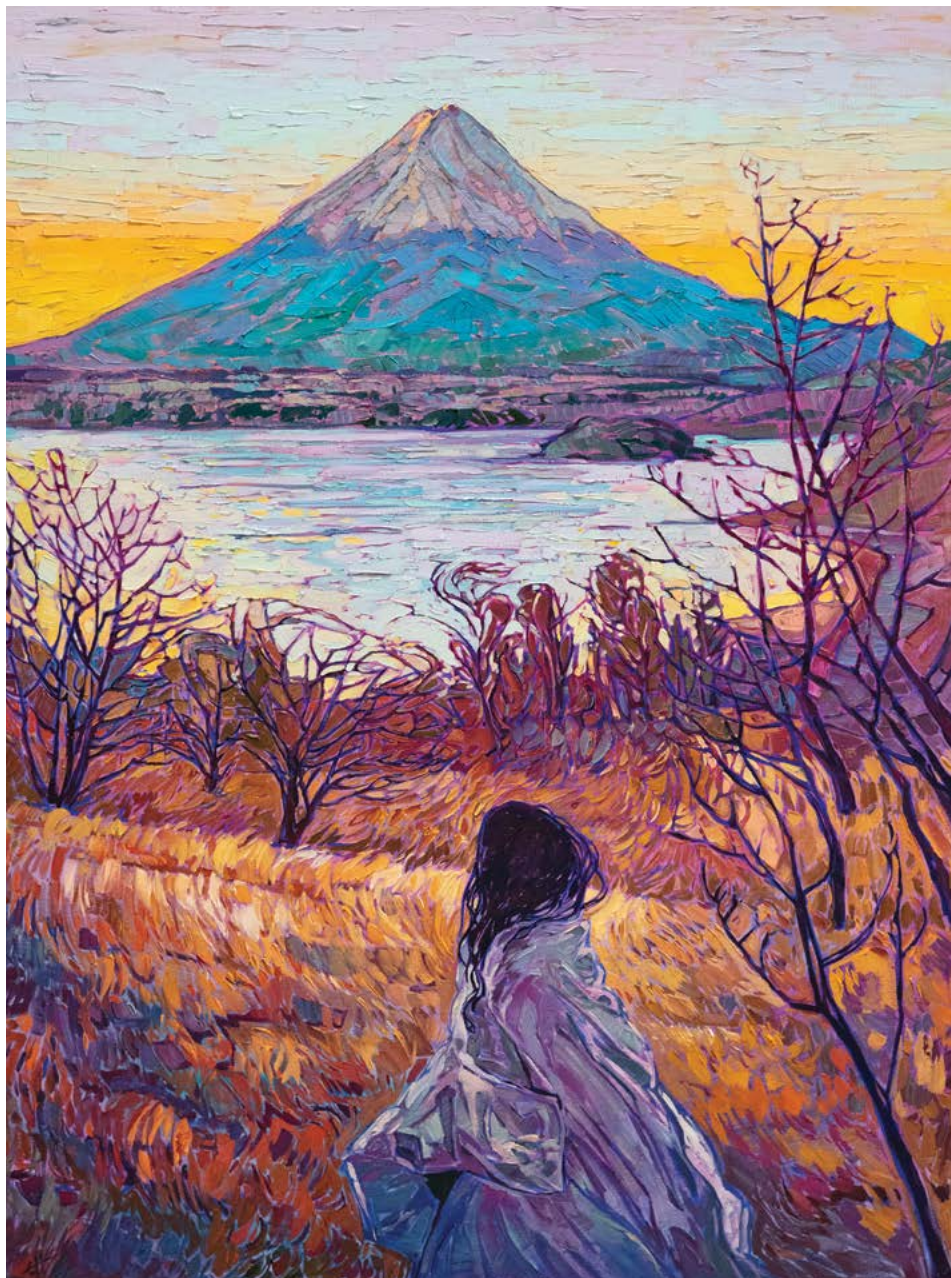
SPOTLIGHT ON A COMMISSION

LOVE TO CREATE one-of-a-kind commissions that capture a specific memory or location. It is fun to work with photographs my collectors have taken to recapture the magic from that moment.

Recently I finished a commission of Mt. Fuji, Japan. The collector came to me with a sweet and inspiring story: the painting would be a gift for his wife for her upcoming 50th birthday. Years earlier, they had spent a memorable vacation on Lake Kawaguchi, across from Mt. Fuji. After they arrived, they waited all day to see the famous mountain, but the thick fog prevented them from seeing across the lake. Finally, early the next morning, the fog cleared, and the sun rose across a bright, crisp vista. The husband woke up his wife, and she came out onto the balcony wrapped in a sheet. Together they watched the sun rise over the distant volcano. It was a spiritual moment in their relationship they never forgot.

My job as the artist was to recapture the magic. You can see the painting I created (top right), the original reference photo, and a photo taken after the husband presented his wife with the painting on the anniversary trip to Mt. Fuji itself! I think he wins the prize for Husband of the Year.

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Painting Stories



SPOTLIGHT ON A COMMISSION: *Fjords of Norway* | by Erin Hanson

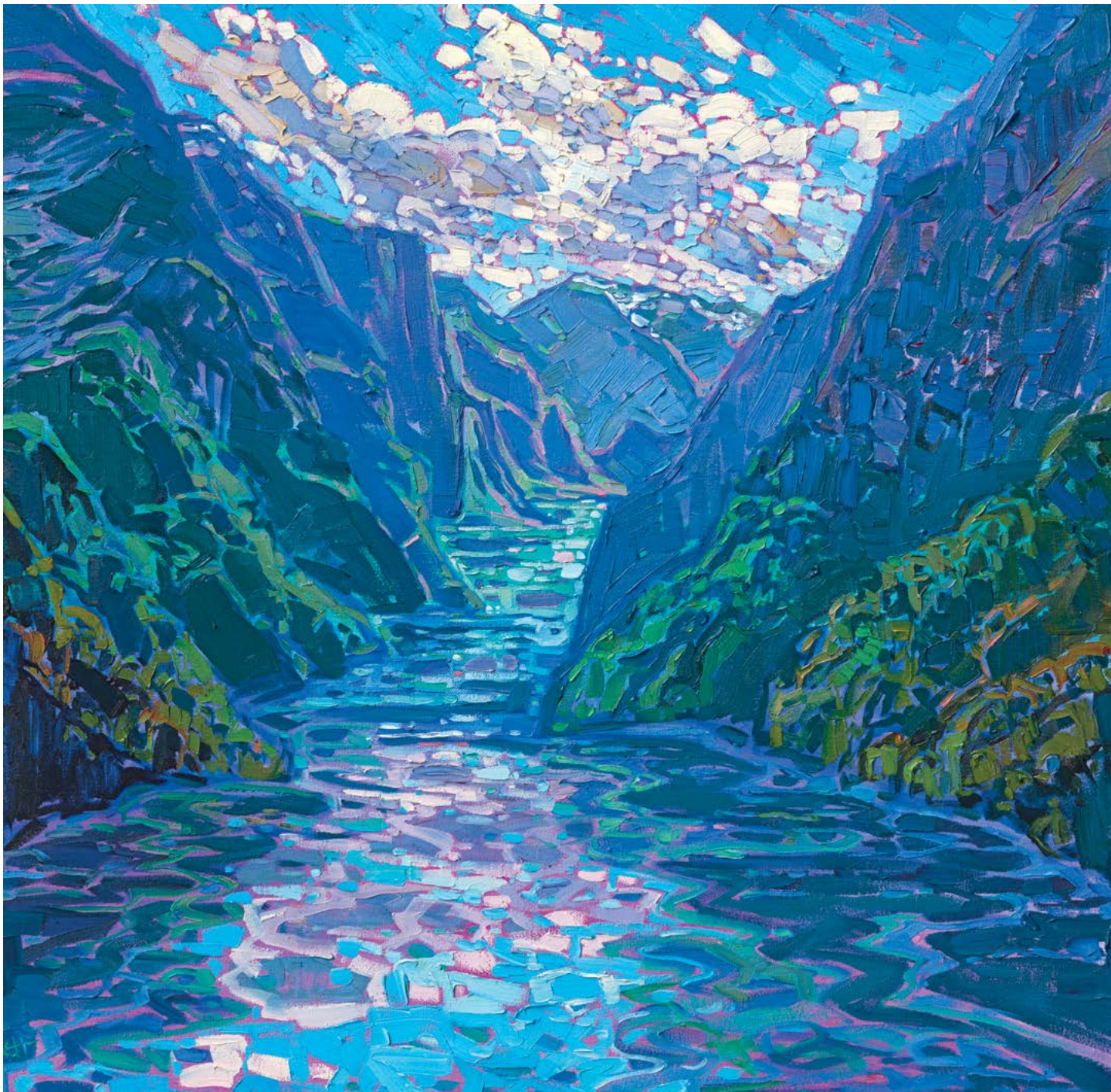
RECENTLY COMPLETED A COMMISSION of a place I have never visited before: the fjords of Norway. The collectors gave me a series of photographs they had taken on their vacation. I made a few pencil sketches showing different compositional ideas, combining elements from various photos. We landed on the photograph above that had been taken from a boat. I added some elevation to create more depth to the picture. You can see the completed painting on the opposite page.

Here is what the collectors had to say about the commission process:

“ Since childhood, I have always loved nature and impressionism, so when my husband came across Erin's artwork, I immediately fell in love with her modern twist and vibrant colors. Each piece of art allows you to step into the painting... you can feel the wind blowing and the warmth of the setting sun, while watching the rainbow-colored clouds tranquilly float by.

We have now invested in one copy and two originals. The latest original is a large 28" x 28" painting my husband commissioned to capture a once-in-a-lifetime trip to Norway. We took a beautiful train ride through waterfalls and a boat ride through the fjords. This is homage to my Scandinavian roots, a celebration of 25 years of marriage, and a connection for my children to one day return. Until then, this beautiful painting will transport us to relive those amazing memories.

Thank you, Erin, for helping us fill our home with beauty and memories! ”
Love, The Elder Family



FJORDS OF NORWAY
Commissioned oil painting
28 x 28 in