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COVER
The Perch
(detail, reversed)

by Reenie Kennedy

LAURIN McCracken

Texas artist Laurin McCracken usually paints highly detailed still lifes and florals. However, when he saw this photograph of Revolutionary War soldier re-enactors taken by his daughter on a recent visit to Williamsburg, Virginia, he knew he wanted to paint the scene. "I was attracted to the repetition of the shapes and colors of the soldiers' uniforms and the rhythm of the vertical elements of their weapons marching across the image," McCracken says.

He altered some of the elements of the photograph while working on the painting. "The re-enactors were taking a break on the porch of a brick building, and there was a window behind them," the artist describes. "I decided that the brickwork would be too busy and that the window would dilute the rhythm of the colors and shapes, so I decided to leave the background blank. As I got into the painting it became a bit sterile. At one point I missed a brushstroke and sprayed some paint. That led to more spattering, and then I added some controlled running. I was careful to stop before it got overworked. After living with it for a few days, I deep-

ened some of the shadows to add contrast. One of my friends commented that the image is an effective symbol of war, combining order with mess and confusion."

According to McCracken, this painting is much looser than his still lifes and florals, but the basic painting method remains the same. He used his usual palette of Winsor & Newton colors with Series 7 kolinsky round brushes on Fabriano 300-lb soft-finish paper. When painting the whites of the uniforms, he employed the same two-brush technique he uses to paint a draped tablecloth in a still life. This involves laying down pigment with one brush and using the other to feather out the pigment with water to make two-dimensional objects look three-dimensional. "The biggest challenge was the faces," McCracken says. "Because I have never done portrait work, this caused me the greatest concern. If these soldiers saw the painting, I would like to believe they would recognize themselves."

For more information, visit McCracken's website at www.lauringallery.com, or e-mail him at laurinmc@aol.com.



Williamsburg Soldiers
2008, watercolor, 21 x 29.
Collection the artist.