



Eye(s) on the Experts

MY LEFT EYELID FLICKERED OPEN FOR A brief moment before collapsing under the weight of both itself and exhaustion, closing me again into the darkness. I slipped back into a light doze for a few minutes, then, stirring again, my aforementioned eyelid went for round two, fluttering open and staying upright longer, allowing my eye to strain to focus on the sights around me.

The room was becoming clearer and I could hear what had captured my attention and brought me out of my slumber. I blinked and focused my eye on the television screen across the room. It was just one eye, because the other one was closed and pressed against my pillow, in which most of my face was buried.

It was T-minus one week until deadline, and rather than reading, writing, editing and putting the finishing touches on this issue of the magazine, I was buried deep in the covers of my bedding, knocked out by the flu (and yes, for the record, I did get a flu shot this year.). I was completely zapped of any energy, to the point that a walk down to the kitchen for juice a bit earlier had depleted any reserves of energy I had. Crawling back into bed, I had been swept away to the land of slumber while the TV quietly played in the background, left on the PBS station it had last been tuned in to.

As I blinked my left eye again and looked at the television, I saw a close up of a paintbrush gently brushing against a canvas. Accompanying the brushstrokes was a gentle voice. "We're just going to add a little orange right here, and bring out the colors of the sun playing off of the trees."

A stocky older gentleman with a thick gray beard and tufts of white hair sticking out from under a wool derby cap stood in denim overalls in front of a canvas, deftly drawing his brush across the canvas, swiftly coaxing a beautiful forest scene where there had been nothing moments earlier.

I may not have looked interested as I lay there, unmoving and wrapped in a goose down comforter, but my mind was captivated and I was fascinated by what I was watching. It was almost magical how quickly this artist was creating a painting before my eye (singular ; I still hadn't the energy to move my head and expose my right eye).

I took a painting class with my friend Jessica last summer, and it took me five weeks to perfect one painting. It was a barn, set against a backdrop of pastures and a sunset. Meeting once a week for a two-hour class, I toiled over that painting for five of the six weeks during which the class was held. Fine-tuning the pinks and oranges of the sunset, the perspective of the barn and the shading on a bank of clouds, I labored over getting it just right. As I watched the painter on TV, though, his very detailed painting came to life before my eyes. With confident movements he would swirl the brush through the paint on his palette, mixing colors with wild abandon and great results. "Let's add some shrubbery here," he would say, pushing the brush against the canvas and depositing the right amount of paint, which in the care of his confident hands truly looked like a row of bushes springing up in a forest scene. Without fear or trepidation, he transformed an unplanned streak of paint into a birch tree.

It would have taken me years to create a painting that was halfway near the quality of what he had thrown together in twenty minutes. This artist was an expert, and he demonstrated the fact that when you have the tools, the skills and the experience, you can make magic happen. Try as we may to do things on our own, sometimes we just need to turn to an expert to get the job done.

We're bringing you the experts in this issue! Our annual Top Dentists list on page 58 is a rundown of who are the top-rated dentists in our community. It is a chance to sing the praises of some of this region's mightiest defenders of the tooth and all it does to help us in our daily life. With 113 dental experts listed, you're sure to find the right match for your oral health care needs.

For those anticipating a wedding this year and trying to figure out how to get started on the planning process, you are in luck. We have the incredible Jaime Johnson, owner of Jaime Johnson Events (JJE), sharing her best wedding planning advice, beginning on page 43. Jaime's spontaneous creativity combined with fifteen years of professional experience guarantees a unique approach to every occasion. From the traditional to the cutting-edge, your event is sure to benefit from Jaime's charisma and expertise.

Barb Beddor and Toby Steward, who brought the U.S. Figure Skating Championships to Spokane in 2007 and 2010, are experts when it comes to promoting our great city to the sporting world. They share the "What I Know" feature on page 34.

A local arts organization is benefitting from the contributions of an expert, as well. Zuill Bailey, who graces our cover in this issue and is widely considered to be one of the premiere cellists in the world, is the new artistic director for the 2014 Northwest Bach Festival, which takes place in Spokane, February 25th through March 9th this year. Read about him and the event on page 135.

This issue is filled with experts who have a passion for their work and our community. It is people like these experts who make Spokane such a great place to live. Enjoy reading all that they have to share – you'll want to keep both eyes open!

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