



*“Crisp Fall Evening” | 9” x 12” | soft pastels*

## Art, Psychology and Spirit | Nancy Ging

By Jessica H. Stone



To experience the art of Nancy Ging is to step into a fleeting moment that will take your breath away. Her work reflects the spiritual calm and mystical beauty of the small Pacific Northwest island she calls home. Awe-inspired by the quiet grace and power of the sea, forests, and creatures that surround her on a daily basis, Ging considers her work an act of deep gratitude.



*“Echo Cove II” | 12” x 16” | soft pastels*

Ging spent her early childhood in Indiana watching her mother do paint by numbers projects and work on handcrafts. By age seven, when the family moved to Nevada, Ging had developed a keen interest in drawing and painting, although her pieces were original and not “by the numbers.” As a young person, she experimented with sketching and oils and showed promise as an artist.

After her first year of college, Ging moved to Alaska to experience the adventure and vastness of the Alaskan wilderness. She spent twelve years working various jobs all the while backpacking, sailing, scuba diving and marveling at the wealth and beauty of Alaska’s backwoods. In Alaska Ging experienced a profound sense of wonder for the natural world.

Eventually, she returned to the lower 48 and received formal training in Clinical Psychology – first with a BS from Seattle Pacific and then with an MS at the University of Idaho. Her attention to art resurfaced when she began her career as a mental health counselor. During that time with instruction from artist Judy North, Ging noticed connections between psychological needs and how they might be expressed through art. North led Ging to realize that technique comes after the artistic drive and that, for an artist, drive is both psychological and spiritual. Technique can be learned but the drive to create art, to express the light and the feeling of even the most familiar scene, comes from deep inside.

After several years working in the mental health field, Ging moved on to open and operate a metaphysical bookstore in Idaho. She continued to note the relationship between psychology and art and to observe a spiritual connection between the two – an observation that would come to influence her creative work.

In 1995 Ging sold her bookstore and drove a pickup truck to Camano Island in Washington State. She traveled with an old computer, and the love of her life, her young daughter, Joan. With proceeds from the sale of the store, Ging spent a year learning to create beautiful and highly functional websites while encouraging Joan's interests in music and writing. Ging's work in website design was yet another step in her process of learning to blend psychology with the creation of art.

In 2007 a painting class at a local community college unlocked another channel and significantly changed both Ging's outlook and her work. Appreciation for her work by her teacher and fellow students encouraged Ging to seriously consider making art professionally. She worked first with acrylics, and more recently, with soft pastels.

Nature, with its generous abundance and beauty, is the primary inspiration for Ging's work. Whether she paints the calm of a sunrise, the majesty of Mt. Baker, the sweeping beach at Echo Point, or a tumultuous sky



*"Purple Dawn" | 6" x 6" | soft pastels*

before a summer storm, her work shares a sense of place and quietly communicates the grace and magic of each breath-taking moment depicted.

In addition to the natural world, the enthusiasm of Ging's eight-year-old grandson, Sam, frequently informs her art. Ging, her daughter, and her grandson share a quiet island abode, which sits tucked between a beach and a fragrant forest. Ging and her daughter share the tasks of homeschooling Sam. During the day, this presents some time challenges for Ging. However, Sam has become increasingly interested in creating art with his grandmother and now the two work together frequently. Ging



*“Beach Enterprise” | 18” x 24” | soft pastels*

paints scenes from her beloved island and Sam draws and paints his favorite subject, cars.

As she watches her grandson splash in the water or play among the trees, Ging snaps photos and later works to express the scenes, the magical moments that captivate her. “One day I looked up, and the sky was so... well, I couldn’t describe it in words, but I could show it through the pastels.”

Although she has worked with various media, Ging is particularly

impressed with pastels for a number of reasons. First, because there is no brush between the artist and the page, pastels offer a direct hand to paper connection that allows for not only a visual but also a tactile relationship with each piece. The pure pigmentation and crystalline structure of pastels leave a soft shimmer on the paper that allows light to sparkle from within the work. To preserve this light Ging avoids the use of dulling fixatives and mats her work under glass. Finally, unlike wet paint, pastels allow for interruption.

Working with this medium Ging can stop when she needs to help Sam with homework or other projects and can begin again when the time is more convenient.

Ging is an accomplished and prolific artist. Her piece, *Last Flight at Dawn*, hung in the juried 29<sup>th</sup> Annual International Show of the NW Pastel Society. She is regularly featured in local galleries and in Lummi Island Studio Tours. She is an active member of the NW Pastel Society and the Lummi Island Artists. She also participates in her local community and contributes through

her work on the Ferry Advisory Committee and by serving on the Board of the Friends of the Island Library. She has authored a weekly newspaper column for the Bellingham Herald and has maintained two long-running blogs including the popular *Whatcom Locavore*.

Ging believes in the importance of art in the psychological well-being of both the artist and the viewer. For Nancy Ging, creating art is an act of spiritual appreciation for those magical life moments that take our breath away. Please visit her website: [www.nancygingart.com](http://www.nancygingart.com).



*“Last Flight At Dawn” | 8.5” x 11.5” | soft pastels*