

work is lurid and gripping—and indicative of Watts' realistic impressionism.

BORN IN 1970 IN SAN DIEGO, Watts was influenced by his Midwestern parents' sensibilities while growing up. Decades ago, his mother and father (also a painter) had been drawn to California's Mediterranean climate with its pleasing—and then far less populous—coastline. They brought with them the dreams still shared by millions of other émigrés seeking the good life. They nurtured in Jeffrey—one of three children—a reverence for art as the profoundest form of personal expression.

Watts' earliest memories are of hanging around a studio that his father and seven other prominent illustrators shared in downtown San Diego. He would watch them work quickly to complete assignments on deadline. "It was ideal for young, impressionable eyes, and I attribute much of my early development to this experience," he says. "It allowed me to understand, firsthand, the trials and tribulations of being a working artist."

When Watts wasn't drawing, he was pedaling as a competitive cyclist. During grueling workouts and long-distance tours, he learned how to push through physical pain and channel his mental focus. His aspirations of being the next Greg LeMond, however, ended abruptly following an injury.

Encouraged by his parents, Watts enrolled at a little-known academy north of Los Angeles called the California Art Institute in Calabasas. "It was a fantastic little school," he says, noting that he received tutelage from owner-painter Fred Fixler and such instructors as Glenn Orbik, Morgan Weistling, Andrew Burward-Hoy, and Mark Westermore.

Today, Watts resides in the seaside town of Leucadia up the coast from San Diego. In Encinitas, a neighboring community, he and his wife, Krista, operate the Watts Atelier of the Arts, a life-drawing and painting studio. Both Leucadia and Encinitas have become synonymous with artists and surfers. "Leucadia is one of the last bastions of the old funky coastal communities," Watts maintains. "It has a certain nostalgia—I would imagine the way Laguna was maybe 50 or 60 years ago."

Modeled after the French approach to apprenticeship, Watts Atelier was boldly opened when



FARRIER STUDY, OIL, 24 X 18.

Watts was just 22 and has operated for 14 years. Ten teachers oversee a curriculum that offers 80 different classes. It was launched, in part, out of Watts' own frustration that in the greater San Diego area there was no welcoming venue where young artists could find the kind of collegiality he experienced within his father's circle of illustrator friends.

"I absolutely love to teach, and I know it will always be a part of my life," Watts says of the school. "This is a very old-school approach to teaching and learning, and I am very proud of the results we are

"I love controlled chaos in a painting. I want the canvas to challenge the viewer."

attaining. Lots of demonstrations. Lots of one-on-one instruction." Watts enjoys exposing students to everything from the legendary California landscape painters to the portraits of John Singer Sargent and illustrations of Frank Frazetta.

As part of the continuum of landscape painters