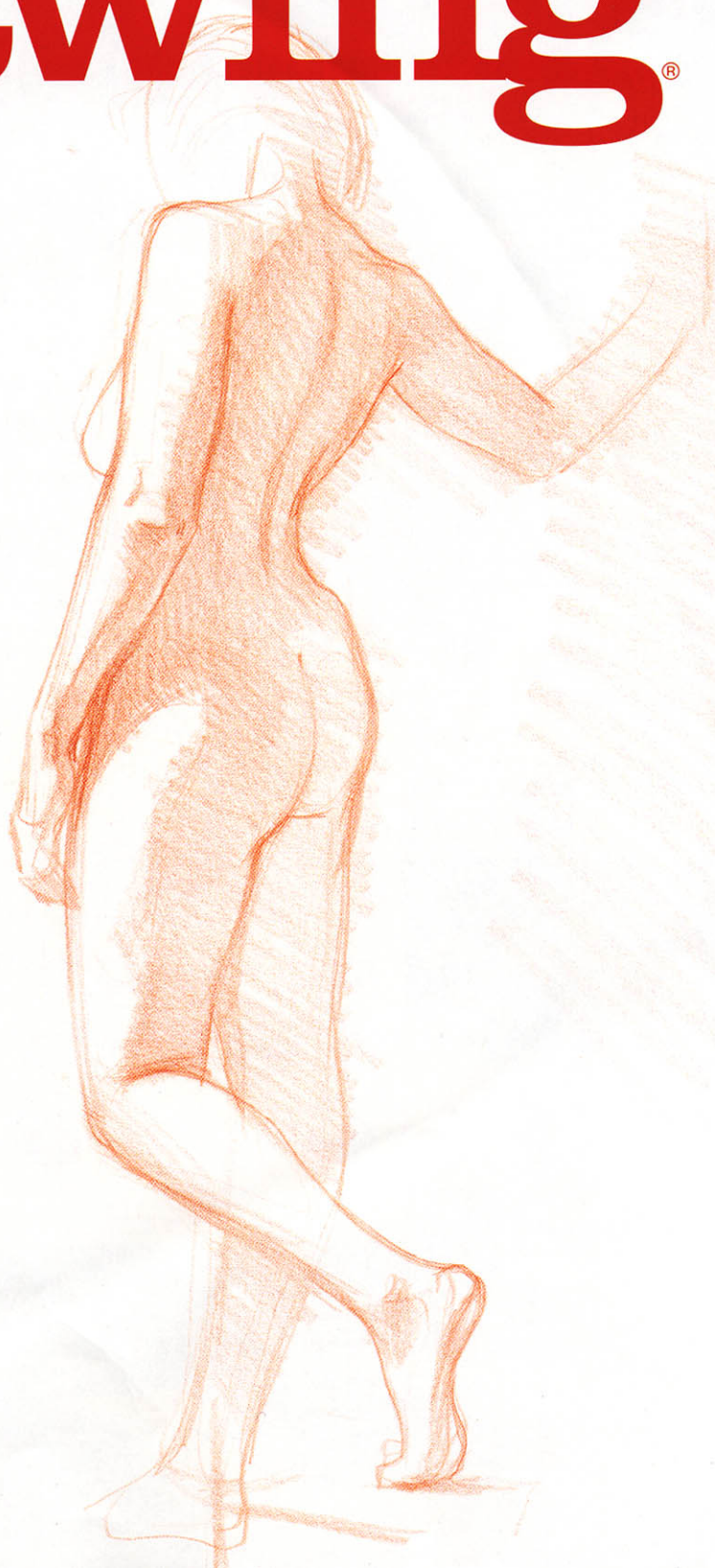
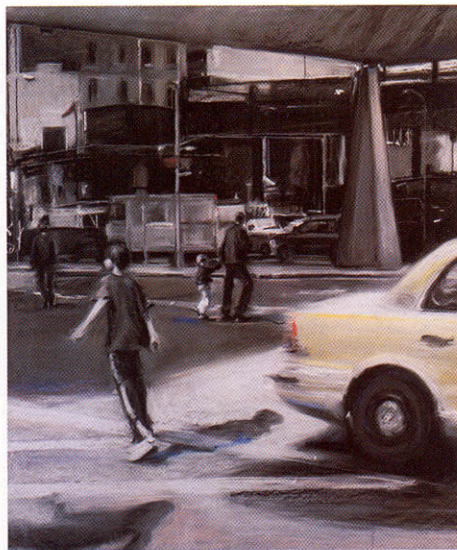


# Drawing®

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COVER:  
**Leaning Figure**  
(detail, reversed)  
by Dan Gheno

INSET:  
**Chambers Street**  
by Susan Grossman



“**A**rchitects are trained to see things,” says Laurin McCracken, who works three weeks out of the month for the large Memphis architectural firm of Looney Ricks Kiss. The other week he spends in his home studio, producing and marketing his own fine-art still lifes and florals, mostly, but also the occasional rendering of an architectural subject that may have caught his eye, such as *Call Box*.

“I began as a Sunday painter. Now I’m trying to build a business to fund my retirement,” he says. “I’m still just building the résumé. I started sending things to juried watercolor shows last year.”

He learned watercolor six years ago, after a lifetime of sketching and drawing. Since a childhood bout with polio, McCracken says he has drawn and carried a sketchbook, which these days he fills with scenes of “airplane interiors, corporate meetings in Japan,” and tourist attractions he happens upon in his peregrinations as his company’s marketing and strategies officer.

His job sometimes brings him to college campuses, where he recruits graduates from the architecture schools. Students are trained to show accuracy and reality in their renderings, a job easily accomplished with software programs such as Adobe Photoshop. Still, not every academic curriculum has sidestepped the disciplines of draftsmanship. “At The University of Texas at Austin, they still appreciate

drawing. These kids can think through the ends of their pencils,” he says. And at Notre Dame, elevations and presentation renderings for the master’s thesis project must be executed in watercolor, he says. When it comes to seeing what their completed building will look like, some clients still prefer the warmth and emotional pull of a hand-painted rendering, McCracken believes. “You can be too literal,” he says. With a painted rendering, you may not have all the details worked out, and that’s on purpose. “You want the viewer to complete it for you,” he says.

Which brings us back to the magic of art. A fan of 16th- and 17th-century Dutch and Flemish realist painting, McCracken tends to paint close-up florals and still lifes marked by their shimmering surfaces of silver, mirrors, and glass. “Painting buildings is too much like work,” he says.

Besides, his audience favors flowers. He works with an art consultant, Sue Wiggins of Philadelphia, who markets his pieces to the curators of large corporate collections. “I’ve turned down galleries who won’t sell at my price point,” McCracken says. “Once you enter the art world at one price point, it pretty much sets where you can go. If you enter at a price point of \$150 it would be really difficult to go to \$15,000 per painting. It would take a lifetime, and I don’t have a lifetime. There’s fine art and there’s mass art, and I’m aiming for fine art,” he says.

### Call Box

by Laurin McCracken,  
2004, watercolor, 17 x 15.  
Collection the artist.

## About the Artist

**Laurin McCracken** holds Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Architecture degrees from Rice University, in Houston, and a Masters in Architecture and Urban Planning degree from Princeton University. He has traveled extensively in Europe, the Middle East, and Japan as a practicing architect, photographer, and painter. He studied with Gwen Bragg at The Art League School, in Alexandria, Virginia, and with Alain Gavin at The Art Institute of Chicago. He is an award-winning artist whose paintings have been exhibited in juried shows coast to coast, including those sponsored by the Philadelphia Watercolor Society, Niagara Frontier Watercolor Society, Pittsburgh Watercolor Society, California Watercolor Society, Southern Watercolor Society, and American Watercolor Society. He has paintings in corporate and private collections, including McGraw-Hill’s corporate collection and the Urban Land Institute. See more of his work at [www.lauringallery.com](http://www.lauringallery.com).





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