



NEW YEAR NEW LOOK

11 Artists to Watch

in 2011

American Artist forges ahead into the new year by teaming up with a select group of art-world professionals—those working in galleries, schools, community art organizations, and art-materials manufacturers—to choose a cohort of talented artists who exemplify our community's shared passion for art and will act as our guides for future progress.



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10 | Jordan Sokol

PUTTING ARTISTIC TRAINING TO USE IN THE CREATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL VISION

One challenge for young painters is to find training that suits their style and leads them, through years of hard work, to a greater mastery of their craft. After completing an intensive course of study, they face a second challenge: how to utilize the skills they have

developed to further an individual artistic vision. Jordan Sokol is one artist who has successfully incorporated the methods he learned in his education toward the creation of unique art. His painting is informed by his training, but it is not defined or limited by it.

Sokol studied at The Florence Academy of Art (FAA), where he is now a principal instructor. One of the trademarks of FAA's curriculum is the use of the sight-size method, an exacting process of drawing and painting in which artists position their surface so that when viewed from a specific point, the subject and the artwork appear next to each other at exactly the same size. This method has proven to be a strong learning tool for many artists, but even after an artist has trained extensively with the method and developed a strong ability to capture life,

the task of creating art is far from over. The artist still has to put his or her skills to use creating unique compositions that capture the feeling and emotion of life.

In the short time since he graduated from the FAA, Sokol has done this. His interiors and still lifes are bathed in unified light that, when combined with the detailed and personal subject matter, gives them a deeply lived-in feeling. His portraits are also quiet, unified works, often tinged with a touch of melancholy.

ABOVE
Young Girl
2010, oil on panel,
9 x 8. Private collection.

OPPOSITE PAGE
Kitchen
2008, oil on linen,
19 x 13. Collection Amaya Gurspide.



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Sokol's paintings are the work of an artist comfortable with his craft who is trying to reveal a little of the beauty and mystery of the world around him.

His training still informs his artistic process many years later. "I use the sight-size method because it's a very useful tool for achieving accuracy in drawing," he says. "Some consider it just a tool for measuring, but I use the measuring aspect of it as a way of checking my own eye. I try to look first, guess where things will go, and then measure. After years of that, you learn your own margins of error and learn to train your eye. The main thing I get is being able to have that direct visual comparison."

Sokol works exclusively from life. After painting an imprimatura, he blocks in his composition directly on the canvas in raw umber. After this initial drawing, he begins laying in color, focusing on achieving the correct value. Once he feels the values are correct he shifts his focus to color and refines the painting to completion. He uses a fairly limited palette of yellow ochre, English red, vermilion, cobalt blue, raw umber, Cremnitz white, and ivory black.

The artist has found a fruitful subject in painting interior scenes of his home and studio. "The thing that attracts me to interiors is how they represent an intimate space," the



ABOVE
Studio Interior
2008, oil on linen,
21 x 16. Private collection.

OPPOSITE PAGE
Reclining Nude
2008, oil on linen,
12 x 19½. Private collection.



DANIEL GRAVES on Jordan Sokol

Daniel Graves (right) graduated from the Maryland Institute College of Art, in Baltimore, studied at the Atelier Lack Studio of Fine Art, in Minneapolis, and trained at the Villa Schifanoia Graduate School of Fine Art, in Florence, Italy, before studying privately with Nerina Simi. He began teaching in Florence in the late 1970s and founded The Florence Academy of Art in 1991. In 2008, Graves and The Florence Academy of Art received the Excellence in Art Education Award from the Portrait Society of America. For more information, visit his website at www.danielgraves.com.

"When asked to identify an individual whose talent and uniqueness the



young artist brings something to our reality that we lack or need more of? I find the answer in the drawings and paintings of Jordan Sokol.

"In 2008 Jordan completed his studies at The Florence Academy of Art, which consisted of a three-year painting course and fourth year of specialization. During his time as a student, he

world has yet to recognize, I considered the question that drives my own work as an artist: What does our world need? What

could draw and paint to a high degree of accomplishment. Now painting professionally, Jordan works slowly and thoughtfully to develop a thoroughly personal aesthetic. Each line is superbly refined; each object is treated with enormous sensitivity. He imbues his figures and interiors with the weight and solidity of the real world, but he casts them in a dreamlike glow that is his vision of beauty. I am sure this is something the market will one day respond to, as patrons look to art in search of beauty in everyday life. I foresee Jordan becoming a strong voice in the art world."

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About the Artist

Jordan Sokol graduated from The Florence Academy of Art (FAA), in Italy, and also studied at the Hudson River Fellowship, in New York. He began teaching at the FAA when he was a student, and he is now a principal instructor in the school's painting program. He has exhibited paintings in both the United States and Europe. For more information, visit www.jordansokol.com.

artist says. "I'm also drawn, in general, to the idea of process, and the interiors represent a space that's also sort of the process of everyday living."

When deciding what exact view to paint, these interests interact with compositional choices, as the artist looks for interesting shapes and compelling juxtapositions of objects. Practical considerations also come into play, such as whether there is enough space for the artist to step back from this subject to see and paint it without distorting perspective.

Sokol's paintings—even his portraits—are not necessarily about his subjects but about the art and the beauty of painting. "When I'm choosing a figure composition, I may have certain ideas in mind—usually a feeling, mood, or emotion that I'm looking for in my composition," the artist says. "I'd like to be able to paint a simple composition and still be able to transmit some kind of emotion or honesty so that whoever is looking at the painting can still relate to it." By using his training to further his vision of the everyday world, Sokol is doing just that, revealing beauty and honesty for those lucky enough to view his paintings. ■

Written by Austin R. Williams, an associate editor of American Artist.



OPPOSITE PAGE

Mink

2010, oil on linen,
21½ x 23½.
Collection The
Florence Academy
of Art, Florence,
Italy.

ABOVE

Studio, Florence

2009, oil on linen,
19½ x 13½.
Collection Kate
Lehman.

LEFT

Self-portrait

2009, oil on linen,
12 x 8. Collection
Travis Schlaht.