

Ramon Kelley is a people painter.

During his career as a professional artist, his impressionistic portrait and nude studies executed in oil, pastels and watercolors have gained him nation-



wide attention and praise. He is a member of the National Academy of Western Art, the American Watercolor Society, the Allied Artist of America, the Pastel Artist of America and the National Arts Club.

“When I started painting,” said Ramon, “my big thing was the Pueblo Indians because I enjoyed them. I also enjoyed painting Blacks, old men and young children. I’m known for painting people and I couldn’t change that now even if I wanted to. I may change my styles and go more modern, but there will always be people involved in my work.”

“Art is something I’ve devoted my entire life to,” continued Ramon. “It has been my girlfriend and my lover. I’ve tendered her, loved her and caressed her. I’m addicted and committed to this thing called art.”

As a young boy and a young man in the Navy, Ramon made drawings for his friends. People often came to him asking for a sketch of a girlfriend and he was flattered and happy to oblige. But it wasn’t until his four-year tour gave him the opportunity to visit the great art centers of Europe that he became fully aware of the world of art. No one insisted, or even suggested that he visit the great museums and

galleries and study the sculpture and painting that was everywhere, he was intuitively drawn to the great works of the past.

“I couldn’t believe what I was seeing,” he says. “It was the beginning of my education but also a source of discouragement in one sense. I recognized the enormous gap between what I was seeing and what I could do as an artist. It left me astounded and not knowing where to start.” But Ramon was hooked. He began soaking up the richness of the art around him, studying paintings in detail and attempting to understand the techniques used to create them. He then began the collection of art books, which he still treasures and adds to today. After being discharged from the Navy, Ramon returned to Cheyenne with about fifteen hundred dollars in his pocket and an ambition to become an artist. He remained in Cheyenne for about a year, lived off his savings and drew. With his finances down to nearly his last penny, he concluded that it was time to take what little he had left and do something constructive.

Ramon wanted to go to art school in New York City but he couldn’t afford it. Denver was close by and even though the city didn’t have any fine arts schools at the time, the Colorado Institute of Art did offer a commercial arts program. He enrolled there and for the next nine months received his first taste of the discipline required to get a job done on time in order to meet a deadline. When Ramon left the Colorado Institute of Art, he went to work as a commercial artist. He worked for a number of companies in the Denver area during the next three years, was married to his wife Mona, and chased his dream of a fine art career in his spare time. He took his charcoal and pen drawings to mall and sidewalk shows, and even took part in a few bank shows. He didn’t expect to sell much of his work but since he wanted to become a professional artist, he had to get as much exposure as possible.