

# Morgan Weistling



Above, *Rosie's Bath*, oil on canvas, 30" x 36"  
Following Page, *Pig Tales*, oil on canvas, 24" x 18"





Above, Penny Rain, oil on canvas, 9" x 12"

# Beauty in the Light

written by Lorie Lee Steiner

Intimate vignettes capturing the pioneer spirit of the old West, infused with rustic charm and masterful portraiture. In each work, the presence of warm, comforting light permeates the shadows – subtle punctuation to these captivating narratives on canvas. Such are the beloved paintings of Morgan Weistling, one of the top contemporary artists in America today. A self-proclaimed storyteller, Morgan enjoyed a successful career as an illustrator in the Hollywood movie industry for 14 years before transitioning to the world of fine art in 1998.

## The Story Beginning

His own story began much earlier. When Morgan was old enough to hold a crayon, the artistic fervor was already simmering in his young heart and hands. A passion both accepted and nurtured by his parents, who were themselves, aspiring artists. Morgan's earliest memories are of sitting on his dad's lap and sketching... at just nineteen months of age. Morgan reflects, "My Dad used to say that when they would place me under a painting in the living room, I would just stare at it for hours. He believed I was correcting the perspective in my head. He loved to say things like that." Each night, father and son would draw together before Morgan went to bed, communicating events of the day and turning them into little comic strip drawings. Many years later, Morgan found himself repeating the familiar ritual, as he watched his youngest daughter undress her dolls and wash their clothes – a scene eventually portrayed on canvas in a painting titled "The Doll Laundry."

Morgan began formal art training at California's Brandes Art Institute at the impressionable age of 15. There, under the watchful eye of Fred Fixler, he developed his painting skills by studying how light and tone tells the story of form. Fixler used classical methods with a rigorous approach, teaching that great draftsmanship is the root of all great art.

## The Next Step and the Future

By the time he turned 19, Morgan had proved himself an accomplished student whose talents had been recognized by recruiters at Bacon Reneric Design, the top advertising agency in Hollywood. That first stint with commercial illustrations turned into 14 years, during which he created movie posters with every major studio in the entertainment business. "It was stressful, but it was fun," admits Morgan. "Every movie brought a new challenge." When computer-generated imagery (CGI) came into play, his job became even more challenging. For traditional illustrators, the writing was on the wall...

Unsure about the future, he followed the advice of Thomas Blackshear, an artist friend, who told him, "Pray about it." Suddenly, Morgan felt the urge to paint like he was back in school. He gave up illustrating and started painting from life again. That was 1998 and he has never regretted the choice. Morgan soon earned a national reputation for his atmospheric oil paintings - mood-driven works that masterfully express his love for period themes, enriched by detailed research and authentic costumes that he has specially made for his models.

## Telling the Story

"I do these paintings for others to see," Morgan admits. "To communicate to someone else a feeling, a mood, and a story that means something to me. This talent to paint is a gift, and it is meant to be shared. Merely producing the art is not enough. It's that vulnerability of showing it to someone for the first time that makes it complete. Painting is a language for me



Above. *The Dove Keeper*, oil on canvas, 18" x 24"

and requires someone willing to listen. Thankfully, I have found an audience since I started this journey, and it has been a wonderful experience. I have been fortunate to have some very loyal collectors and supporters follow my work during the past 20 years. They love the stories that I create and the moment captured on the canvas."

Inspiration for his paintings comes from a variety of sources but, ultimately, Morgan credits it all as a response to the Creator's hand in the beauty he sees around him. To quote a fellow artist, Charles Hawthorne, who influenced him in art school with his writings, "The artist must show people more – more than they already see, and he must show them with so much human sympathy and understanding that they themselves had seen the beauty and the glory. Here is where the artist comes in and it becomes his passion that creates the soul upon the canvas for all to see."



Above, *The Egg Inspector*, oil on canvas, 30" x 40"

Morgan explains, "The "more" is what drives me. The "more" is in my natural desire to tell stories. Like most artists, I find the pursuit to find beauty and share it to be a large factor in creating works of art. I might add that I also find the pursuit of humor along with that beauty to be a part of my personality. There are two sides of me – the serious artist that is interested in interpreting the light and creating a mood in a historical context and then there is this guy who then paints a frog jumping out of a kid's pocket in church in the hope that it will make you smile. I can't help myself."

When he had his studio built, Morgan was determined that it be warm and inviting like an old farmhouse. So instead of white tables and metal cabinets, he used old wood furniture for studio equipment. His palette sits on a small wood dresser that is on wheels. Everything feels like it might be in a painting, including a large Hughes easel that has been the artist's best friend for 28 years. And of course books, lots and lots of art books.



### Inspiration and Influence

Morgan is impressed with the overall skill and quality coming out of art schools today, remarking, "Twenty years ago it was dismal. But with ateliers around the world, great draftsmanship has re-emerged. I love the work of George Carlson. I think he is unique. I love the way he breaks down a landscape to its essential big forms and you can feel the anatomy under the earth of what he is painting." Other major influences in Morgan's work include John Singer Sargent, Anders Zorn, Nicolai Fechin, Joaquin Sorolla, and illustrators of the Golden Age of Illustration. As for advice to people who are just starting to explore the craft... "find a good art school and draw, draw, draw."

Drawing on time well spent as an illustrator enables Morgan to tackle certain narrative ideas that might pose difficulties for other artists. He acknowledges, "My work stands out from having that professional background and training. But each artist stands out based on their individual personality in the end. My personality comes out in the subjects I pick and the sympathy with how I depict them."

*Previous Page, The Needlepoint Artist, oil on canvas, 24" x 20"*  
*Below, In Her World, oil on canvas, 22" x 32"*



Morgan Weistling  
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I see myself as a movie director, casting my one frame movie and directing it all myself. I love making all those decisions to tell my story. Dad influenced me to love the West and its stories and, here I am today, telling my stories of the West, just like my Dad did.”

### **The Story Vision**

When it comes to process and technique, each artist has a unique perspective. For Morgan Weistling, the ideas come from various sources - memories of his childhood or from his own children, books, movies, and much of the time, a model. He notes, “I will see a new person that inspires an idea and then have to convince them to pose.

*Previous Page, Her Grandmother's Dresser, oil on canvas, 40" x 30"*  
*Below, The Clothesline, oil on canvas, 20" x 24"*



I recently was in line at the market and a gentleman was in front of me that was a Native American. I immediately saw him in my imagination in a painting and had to explain it to him to see if he would help me. In these cases, magazine articles about me are always in my car in case I meet someone like this.”

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### Capturing the Light

Once he has a model or models on hand, Morgan does sketches and color studies; taking reference shots when necessary and then using all those components to start the canvas. He does a very minimal drawing on the canvas – sometimes none at all – working from the inside to outside and hoping it’s done when he reaches the edges. But of course, there is always a lot of adjusting once it’s all down. “My technique is direct painting,” says Morgan, “meaning, I try to finish as I go. I use thinned paint in the shadows and thicker in the lights. I use a palette knife often. Oils are my preferred medium, but I recently took up pastels for a demo at the Prix de West show at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage museum in Oklahoma City. I only had an hour and a half, so I decided to try pastels since there would be no drying issues and I felt I could take it further in that time frame. I since then have fallen in love with them for portraits.”

Doing two museum shows a year, while also creating paintings for his gallery, doesn’t leave much time for commissions, although there are exceptions. Living life to the fullest through art, Morgan Weistling is constantly inspired by seeing God’s creation around him; inspired by light and how it falls and wraps itself around form. He shares, “I love giving impressions of what I see rather than sharp details. Most of my paintings are poems of life or short stories. I was first inspired as a child by seeing something happen on the paper in front of me that I did with a pencil and it looked like the thing I was wanting to see. It was like having a magic power. I marvel when I watch other artists start with a blank canvas and a few hours later something beautiful is there.”

Following Page, *Flour Child*, oil on canvas, 36” x 26”





“So the act of creating is inspirational in and of itself. But coupled with that, it’s the effect of light captured on my canvas that drives me. My subject matter tells human stories but when it all comes down to why I really paint, it’s because I love light. I love to look for the bigger form under the smaller. There is an endless joy from finding that form under it all and letting the light guide me. Being Christian, I find that painting light is an extension of my faith in a symbolic way as well.”

*Discover more about the artist and his wonderful work at [www.morganweistling.com](http://www.morganweistling.com).*

**Morgan Weistling is represented by:**

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*Following Page, The Artist, oil on canvas, 40" x 30"  
Below, The Dance, oil on canvas, 48" x 60"*

