

# WORKING SOUTH

## Paintings and Sketches by Mary Whyte

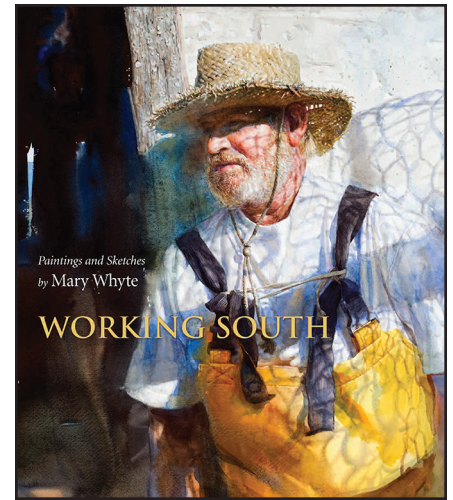
"Mary Whyte is a magnificent artist who has mastered watercolor—one of the most difficult of all painting mediums. Here, she shows us phenomenal skill in portraying rural southern life with an empathy that celebrates the spirit of her subjects, their great passion for their work, and their resilience in facing life's hurdles. Her written narratives which accompany these images are as delightful, tender, and moving as the art itself."—Jonathan Green, southern artist

In *Working South*, renowned watercolorist Mary Whyte captures in exquisite detail the essence of vanishing blue-collar professions from across ten states in the American South with sensitivity and reverence for her subjects. From the textile mill worker and tobacco farmer to the sponge diver and elevator operator, Whyte has sought out some of the last remnants of rural and industrial workforces declining or altogether lost through changes in our economy, environment, technology, and fashion. She shows us a shoeshine man, a hat maker, an oysterman, a shrimper, a ferryman, a funeral band, and others to document that these workers existed and in a bygone era were once ubiquitous across the region.

"When a person works with little audience and few accolades, a truer portrait of character is revealed," explains Whyte in her introduction. As a genre painter with skills and intuition honed through years of practice and toil, she shares much in common with the dedication and character of her subjects. Her vibrant paintings are populated by men and women, young and old, black and white to document the range southerners whose everyday labors go unheralded while keeping the South in business. By rendering these workers amid scenes of their rough-hewn lives, Whyte shares stories of the grace, strength, and dignity exemplified in these images of fading southern ways of life and livelihood.

*Working South* includes a foreword by Martha Severens, curator of the Greenville County Museum of Art in Greenville, South Carolina.

January 2011, 128 pages, 55 color and 6 b&w illus.



Watercolor artist **Mary Whyte** is a teacher and author whose figurative paintings have earned national recognition. A resident of Johns Island, South Carolina, Whyte garners much of her inspiration from the Gullah descendants of coastal Carolina slaves who number among her most prominent subjects. Her portraits are included in numerous corporate, private, and university collections, as well as in the permanent collections of South Carolina's Greenville County Museum of Art and the Gibbes Museum of Art in Charleston. Whyte is the author of *Alfreda's World*, a compilation of her Gullah paintings, as well as *An Artist's Way of Seeing* and *Watercolor for the Serious Beginner*. Her work can be found at Coleman Fine Art in Charleston.

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