

Jeremy Winborg, center, with his daughter, Swede, and his father, Larry. All three are professional painters.



THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Talent runs deep as three generations of Winborgs' make their mark on the art world. By Erin E. Rand

This year, the Winborg family accomplished an impressive feat: three generations of the family were represented at *The Russell* in Great Falls, Montana. Larry C. Winborg and his son Jeremy Winborg each had pieces in the main event, and Jeremy's daughter Swede Winborg, now 19, made her *Western Art Week* debut in the First Strike auction.

"It's quite an honor to have all three of us in *The Russell*—grandfather, son and granddaughter," Larry says. "I don't think it's ever happened before."

Larry, who started it all, knew very early that he was going to work in the arts. "I decided in the first grade that I was going to be an artist," he says. He had a long career as a gallery director in New York, but soon transitioned into working on illustrations of his own. He

spent the 1970s through the 1990s traveling across the United States doing work for publications like *Sports Illustrated*, often with Jeremy by his side.

"Jeremy grew up in my studio. I put a camera or a brush in his hands early on," Larry says. "But I knew right from the start that Jeremy would be an artist, and I knew it the same way with Swede."

Jeremy had the same inkling. "I knew I was going to be an artist because that's what my dad did," he says. "If I'd known there were other options, maybe I'd have pursued them, but it's just something I grew up with and always loved doing."

It wasn't until he was 15 that Jeremy sat down and seriously worked on his first painting. "In retrospect, it was a pretty wild piece. I think my dad was walking by thinking, 'What the heck?' But he decided not to critique it and let

me get it done on my own." He entered it into a statewide high school art show and won the opportunity for his painting to be displayed in Washington, D.C. It was then purchased for \$500 by the Utah Teacher's Association. "After an early success like that, I was like, 'Why would I do anything else?' Of course, there was a million ups and downs after that, but that was really the take-off point."

Swede has so far followed a very similar path to her father. Though she wasn't always so sure she wanted to pursue art as a career, she enjoyed the time she spent in the studio with her family, and she enjoyed exploring her own style in middle school and high school art classes.

"I always had really great art teachers, but in high school, I took oil painting, and that made me more sure about



Jeremy Winborg, *The Long Trail Ahead*, oil, 32½ x 21 in. Available at Legacy Gallery during *Brushed With History*.



Swede Winborg, *Iron Will*, oil, 40 x 20 in.



Larry C. Winborg, *Comin' Atcha*, oil, 40 x 30 in.



Larry C. Winborg, *Fresh Mounts*, oil, 24 x 30 in.

pursuing it as a career." She submitted a painting to the same high school art show as her father had won more than two decades earlier and won first place. Her painting from that contest, titled *Seaport View*, is currently on view at the United States Capitol Building. She was also named an Outstanding Art Student of the Year for the state of Utah in 2021, during her senior year of high school. "Those experiences gave me a huge confidence boost, and showed me that people really appreciated my artwork," she says.

Jeremy says, "I'm always proud of all my kids, and I've always been proud of Swede, but seeing that she wants to follow in my footsteps, and my dad's footsteps, is really neat."

Though all of the Winborg artists create paintings based on the Utah landscapes



Jeremy Winborg, *At the Ready*, oil, 24 x 36 in. Available at Legacy Gallery during *Brushed With History*.

that surround them, they each have developed their own style.

For the last six or seven years, Larry has focused on painting cowboys, though he also does abstract expressionist paintings, a throwback to his early career in New York. “When I’m doing figurative work, I want to capture the energy and movement of it. When you get up close to the painting, there’s something to entertain your eye,” he says. “I use a lot of color, and I’m not interested in painting a boring picture. Of course, it has to be skillfully done, but it’s also got to have something that people can relate to and feel the emotion of.”

Swede enjoys Western subject matter, like her portrait *Iron Will*, which sold in the First Strike auction, but she’s also drawn to coastal imagery and

cityscapes. Like her father, she has embraced the palette knife. “I really like to show a lot of texture in my artwork, especially when I do landscapes,” she says. “I think the knife lets you create details that you wouldn’t be able to show with just a brush.”

Jeremy notes that when he first started out, he painted very similarly to his father. “I needed someone to emulate. I was almost like his apprentice, and we painted a lot of the same subject matter,” he says. Together they would go out into the valley and photograph the landscapes, which turned out to be a critical educational experience for Jeremy.

“Obviously, the actual painting portion is a very important part of the process, but the lead-up to painting—planning photo shoots, doing the sketches

and the color studies—is also so important,” Jeremy says. “It’s the process of transferring something from your heart or your head onto the board, and that’s something I absolutely learned from my dad. I talk to artists in their 50s and 60s who still haven’t gotten the hang of that, and I’ve just been fortunate to have been around it my whole life.”

In the beginning, Jeremy mostly painted landscapes, but eventually, he realized he wanted to do more figurative work. In 2017, he photographed his niece Layla, who is Navajo, in authentic regalia, and that was a turning point in the development of his personal style. “I started painting that, and I knew I loved it. My subject matter shifted at that point, and it was really transformational. Up to that point, I’d been just



Jeremy Winborg, *Evening Sentinel*, oil, 20 x 30 in.

trying to make a living with painting, and all of a sudden, I was able to do the kind of painting that I loved and being shown in the galleries I'd dreamed about being shown in."

This July, Jeremy will have a solo show at Legacy Gallery in Santa Fe titled *Brushed with History*. Showing with Legacy is the culmination of many years worth of hustle.

"Starting in the early 2000s, I would

drag my wife to Legacy Gallery at their old location in Jackson and show them my paintings, trying to get my work in. I'd take a day out of our vacation to do it. And every year, they'd reject me," he says. His persistence finally paid off in 2022, when he showed his work at their Santa Fe Gallery for the first time. "It's still a dream come true to do a one-man show with them. I feel so lucky."

This upcoming show, which opens on

July 19 with a reception from 5 to 7 p.m., will be one of Jeremy's largest ever, with 10 new paintings available. All will feature Native American subjects. The flagship painting of the show is titled *Ray of Light* and is a close-up of his niece with a streak of light that hits her face and runs down her profile. "I like to paint historical events, moments in history, but I also just really love to paint portraits like this one," Jeremy says.



Another new painting is *At the Ready*, which features a young woman aiming a bow and arrow. To capture this image, Jeremy had set up a photo shoot in the mountains. The model was all dressed up, but they were losing light quickly. “I was trying to squeeze out just a couple more photos. I had a few okay photos on my camera, but I’d also given my son a camera,” Jeremy says. “He was probably 7 or 8 at the time.



Swede Winborg, *Driving Teton Park Road*, oil, 12 x 12 in.

But the reference material for this painting ended up coming from one of the photos that he took that day.”

The woman featured in *At the Ready* inspires intrigue, but Jeremy likes to leave the story of the painting up to the viewer. “Maybe she’s trying to protect herself or maybe she’s hunting or maybe she just came upon something as she was walking through the forest.”

While Larry and Jeremy have always worked together in the same studio, in recent years, Larry’s opened up the space to all of his children and grandchildren. “It’s not as nice and neat as it used to be, but we’re producing a lot of art here,” Larry says. “We all bounce ideas off of each other.”

“Swede and I are often elbow to elbow. I help her and she helps me, and it’s been so fun to spend this time together,” Jeremy says.

For Swede, working among two well-known professional artists can be

intimidating, but it’s also invaluable. “Even though it’s scary, I think it’s good to work around people who are better than you. I’m always looking at their stuff trying to figure out why it’s so good, and I’ve grown so much from that.”

Even when they leave the studio, art remains the main topic of conversation. When the family sits around the dinner table, painting is practically the only thing they talk about. It’s the family business, after all. Larry says, “To have your children and grandchildren want to do the same thing that you do, it’s pretty great.” 🐾

Jeremy Winborg: Brushed With History

July 19-29, 2024;
reception, July 19, 5-7 p.m.

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