



Fulfilling a Passion

An Interview with Eli Wilner,
Chief Executive Officer, Eli Wilner & Company



A selection of paintings by Eli Wilner will be displayed at his exhibition at the James Lamantia Gallery in Northport, Long Island on October 25th and 26th

EDITORS' NOTE Eli Wilner is a leading frame dealer, frame restorer, and collector, as well as an acknowledged and published authority on the art of framing. His publications include *Antique American Frames: Identification and Price Guide*, and *The Gilded Edge*. Wilner has framed over 10,000 paintings, including the spectacular frame for Washington Crossing the Delaware for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, and 28 paintings for the White House. Recently, Eli Wilner gave a presentation at the International Foundation for Art Research's evening event, "What Frames Can Tell Us," held at Christie's New York. Eli Wilner has been doing frame evaluations and appraisals since 1978.

COMPANY BRIEF Eli Wilner & Company (eliwilner.com) is a Manhattan gallery, located on New York City's Upper East Side. For over 30 years, Eli Wilner & Company has specialized in European and American period frames and frame restoration, boasting a vast inventory of over 3,500 frames (valued at over \$120 million) spanning the 15th century through the present. Since 1983, Eli Wilner & Company has published over 100 articles about antique frames, and collaborated extensively with curators from The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Cleveland Museum of Art.



While you have been a leader in the art framing world for many years, you also have a passion for painting. Will you discuss your work as an artist?

It has been a long, simmering passion. I have my master's degree in fine art from Hunter College and I've been painting since the age of five. All through my framing career, I have dabbled from time to time in drawings and paintings and taking photographs and writing poetry. About three months ago, I began the transition into attempting a daily regimen of painting and it has taken off.

It has become an addiction. I can't go through a day without painting for several hours. It is the joy I found in my life.

Is there a certain style that characterizes your work?

I think that basically a bridge between the German Expressionists and Romantic painters is how I see myself. I try to tell a story within my paintings. It is very abstract and very personal and it's my storyline, so it becomes an abstract statement.

It is really a way for me to evoke emotions and thoughts about life that I've gained by living in Montauk for the last 25 years.

Will you discuss your Montauk Moments exhibit?

I chose a Long Island gallery for the exhibit because of the connection to Montauk being in Long Island. I chose to be exclusively represented by the

LaMantia Gallery because I like the gallery owner and I felt that he was very sympathetic to what I was working on and how I saw my vision of the world.

What can people expect from this exhibit?

It is a newly renovated gallery in Northport, Long Island. It will have 100 of my paintings on view, ranging in size from 8 by 10 inches to 3 by 4 feet. I will be there for the opening and parts of the show, and then the paintings will be shipped to galleries nationally and internationally.

Do you work on multiple paintings or are you focused on one painting at a time?

I enjoy working on three or four paintings at the same time. I let them dry, varnish them, and leave them lying around while I work on another set of three or four paintings. I keep that process going, introducing new elements from each series of paintings into the previous series, until I feel a piece is finished.



Do you look at your paintings as a business or is more about following a passion?

This is about fulfilling my passion. My intention is to get the artwork into collections, whether public or private, since I like them to be enjoyed by others. I am not focused on the business side, but my goal is for proceeds to go to charity. ●

