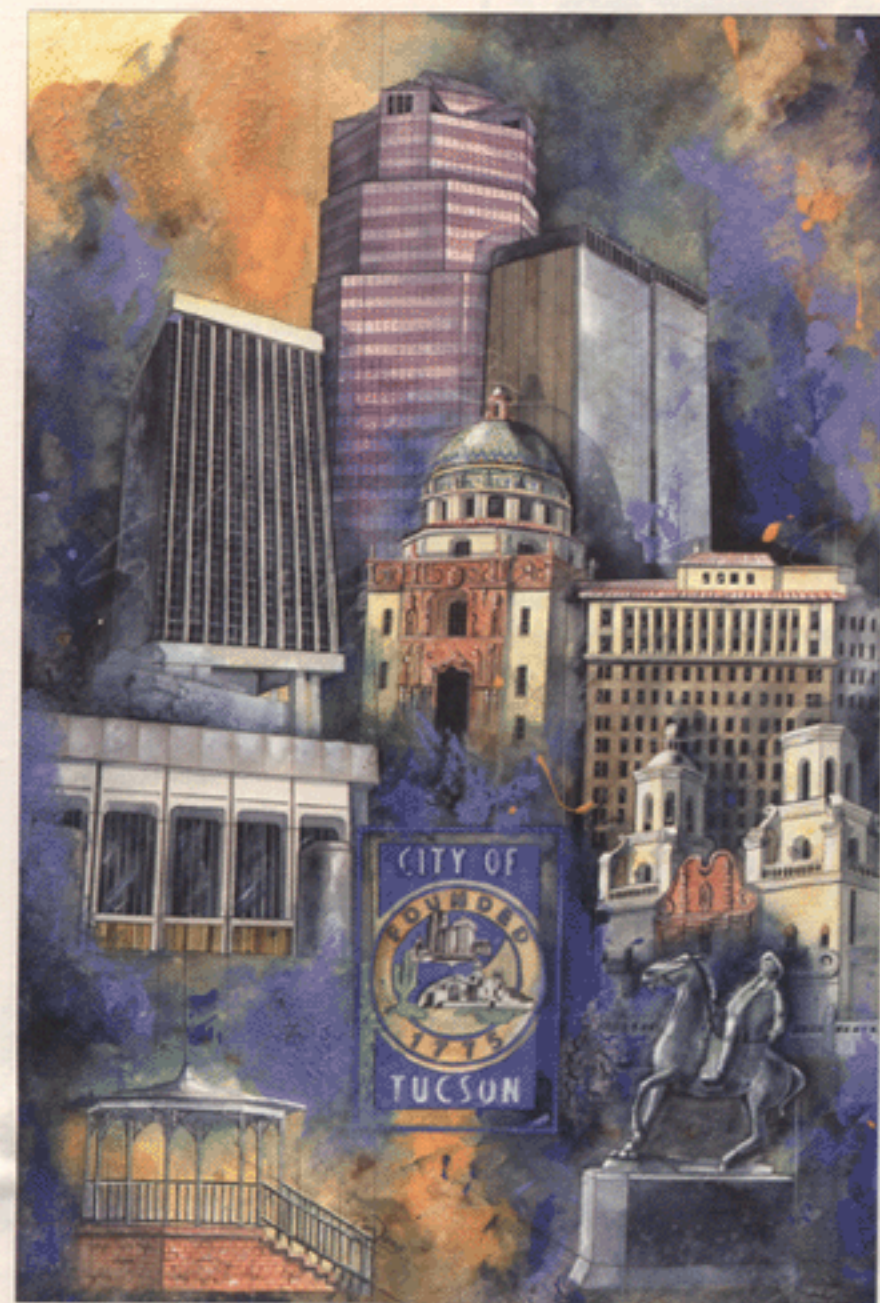




M. Remus/San Xavier (Mission San Xavier del Bac)

L'Art Pour L'Art



M. Remus/City of Tucson

Marc Remus: Impressions of Cities and Countries

by Lorraine A. DarConte

German-born artist Marc Remus has traveled and lived all over the world, including some rather exotic locales such as Japan, Honduras and the Mosquito Coast. Hence, it's no surprise that his work features images from a vast array of countries and cities.

After graduating from the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, Calif., with a B.A. in illustration (he also holds a language degree and speaks English, German, Spanish and Japanese), Remus moved to Honduras and studied the ancient Mesoamerican cultures. After a year, Remus returned to Germany, where he was born and raised, and enrolled at the University of Frankfurt to study cultural anthropology.

"At this same time, I began painting images of ancient cultures that combined artifacts with buildings, such as Mayan temples," he recalls. "Slowly but surely, a series called 'Ancient Cultures of the World' emerged. I then began to shift my interest from international sites to German cities, starting with my home city, Frankfurt."

M. Remus/London, England

Remus's current series of images, "Impressions of Cities and Countries," evolved over a period of about nine years.

To capture the essence of a place, Remus begins by taking about 500 photographs of it, and then choosing a select number of them to incorporate into his art, creating new perspectives of well-known sites.

"The setting that I create doesn't exist anywhere," says Remus. "After I have taken the photos I decide which buildings are most significant and representative [of that city]. I usually choose a combination of buildings, fountains, statues, mascots and coat of arms."

He then draws the objects on a piece of watercolor paper stretched on a large board. "After refining the drawing, I outline it with Prismacolor pencils. At first, I painted using watercolors, but later realized I had to find a way to make the paintings look ancient." Remus tried painting on parchment, but the watercolors didn't work well with it. So, he began looking for a way to make watercolor paper look like parchment.

One day, Remus accidentally spilled tea on his pants, at first lamenting the stain, then realizing it was just what he needed to create his parchment-like paper. "I mixed different kinds of teas and applied them to the watercolor paper, and it worked," he explains. "Over the years, I created and perfected a mixture consisting of teas, tea blossoms, coffee, watercolors, acrylics, matte medium (a type of varnish used in acrylic painting) and salt. The salt keeps the matte medium from building a smooth surface. It cracks the medium and creates beautiful lines and crystals that refine the painting. With the salt, I finally reached the end of a long time of experimentation."

"Once the outlines are clear, I apply the tea/coffee mixture to the area around the buildings and objects, and allow the mixture to enter the drawing in selected areas. I let it dry for one or two days; a second layer of tea/coffee follows, and I then place the tea leaves and blossoms in areas that I find appropriate."

"Once this layer is dry, I start the actual watercolor work. I block in colors and apply watercolors to the background. When these layers are dry, I work on the details. Since the details

are very time-consuming, I break up the painting times by working on the background with larger brushes and splashes. This way I keep my focus and don't rush the details.

"The last step is to mute the acrylics by applying matte medium and then sprinkling salt on it. Once this layer is dry, the painting can be removed from the board."

Although born and raised in Germany, Remus has spent a lot of time in Arizona. "When I was a child I often traveled to Arizona because many members of my family immigrated [here] in the 1960s. Arizona was a second home to me," says Remus, who enjoys Tucson's historic yet modern downtown. "It reminds me a bit of Frankfurt, where the old and the new mingle," he explains. "I have always found it interesting to combine the old and the new, and Tucson has this quality."

As for the future, Remus plans to illustrate his own series of children's books, *Magora*, and finish work on three "city" series that include the resort-like German island of Sylt, near the Danish border; several Arizona cities, including Gilbert, Lake Havasu City, Scottsdale, Peoria and Chandler; and a series on



Images courtesy of Marc Remus