



Outside THE LINES

By **Sarah James**
Photos courtesy of Michael Meissner





Michael Meissner



The world is his canvas for this lifelong painter

Unorthodox blends of vibrant hues are the hallmark of an oil painting by Michael Meissner. To pursue his passion, the former Appling resident follows an equally colorful — and unconventional — path as well.

Last year, he and his wife, Tammy, whose Columbia County roots date back to the Revolutionary War, sold the Appling farm where they had lived since 2013. They left behind his studio and their farmhouse, which he and his grandson rebuilt themselves after it burned down in 2020, and hit the road.

Along with two grandchildren that live with them, the couple travels to art shows across the country in the camper where they reside fulltime.

"It's fun. It's not for everybody," says Meissner. "We know where we'll be parked until September 2025."

When they come back to the area, they typically camp at Mistletoe State Park or Winfield Campground in



Appling. Meissner recently had a show at Sacred Heart Cultural Center, and this month they are transitioning from the East Coast to a West Coast tour.

"We have a big camper and a little camper," Meissner says. "We park the big camper at a central location and take the little camper to art shows. My studio is where the camper is."

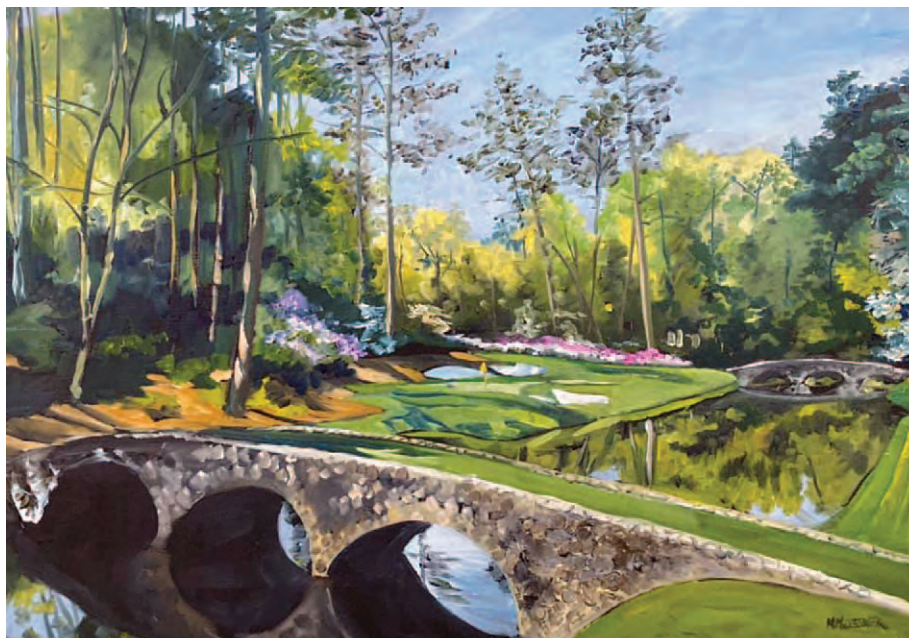
Prolific Painter

A graphic designer by training, he still does some website work for longtime clients from his 30-year career. However, Meissner, a "prolific painter" who will do four or five paintings over a two-day weekend, has been a fulltime artist for the last 10 or 15 years. He has painted for as long as he can remember, though.

"I started out as a kid, and I never put the paintbrush down," says Meissner, who took some art classes in his youth but is mostly self-taught. "My mother had it in her that I was going to be artistic."

He also did a lot of wildlife sketches when he was young, and nature, along with landscapes, are among his favorite subject matters.

Originally from the Northeast where he spent summers on Cape Cod, Meissner also resided in Hilton Head from 1982 until 1997. Consequently, he says, "Beach and marine scenes have always been part of the equation."



A painting of a landscape. In the foreground, a fence made of dark wooden posts and wire runs across the frame. To the left of the fence is a field of tall, dry grasses in shades of yellow and brown. To the right of the fence is a path or stream bed, appearing dark and reflective, possibly with water. The path leads into the distance towards a line of trees and a horizon. The sky is filled with heavy, dark, and dramatic clouds, with a small patch of blue and lighter clouds visible on the right side. The overall style is expressive and painterly, with visible brushstrokes and a rich color palette.

"He told me to stop using Eastman Kodak's colors," Meissner says. "It has to be more than that."

"Mixing colors is easy for me," he says. "I don't think about mixing colors. It just happens very easily."

“Up close, you see the brush strokes and color. When you stand back from the paintings, a lot of them look like photographs.”

MAY 2025



His work includes many paintings of local landmarks, and he lets the market dictate his subject matter as well.

"When you paint for art shows, it's a little different than painting for a gallery," Meissner says. "It's a combination of what you like to paint and what people want to buy."

Connecting with People

The art shows give Meissner an opportunity to interact with people, and he enjoys mixing colors on a brush and letting kids use them to paint.

In addition, he says, "I sit and paint at art shows, which most people don't do. It doesn't bother me to have people look over my shoulder."


Nothing brings him more joy than seeing people smile because of his work.

"The best compliment I can get is when people come out of my booth smiling," says Meissner. "The connection is there when they smile."

Typically, he says, people buy artwork because it enriches their lives. However, his paintings make people smile for any number of reasons. A piece of art might bring back memories for someone, says Meissner, or a person might relate to an animal's expression.

"I'm not a deep, moody artist," he says. "I don't want to contemplate the meaning of the universe. I just want people to feel good."

When Meissner isn't participating in an area art show, his work can be found locally at Java House in Harlem and MAC on Main Art Gallery in Thomson. And always, he has a paintbrush in hand.

"You learn something every time you paint," says Meissner. "You develop your style constantly. To be an artist, you're always practicing." 



When he paints, Meissner puts color in places where it normally doesn't belong, experimenting with atypical combinations to create tones that harmonize and clash.

"Color makes the paintings come alive," he says. "It gives them energy. It gives them life."

He believes color makes his style happy and fun.

"I capture emotion through color. It makes me happy," he says. "Color resonates with the viewer, and it makes them happy."

The artist, who also lived in the North Carolina mountains for 15 years, loves to paint the colorful landscapes of the western United States, and he is known for his national park artwork.

Meissner and his family have visited most of America's national parks, and he loves to capture the beauty of hidden places in the parks that can be seen only by hiking to them.

"It's fun to paint those areas and bring them to people that don't normally see them," says Meissner.

In addition, his commitment to authenticity is evident in his national park art. He meticulously researches each national park's geological features as well as its native flora and fauna before he puts paint to canvas.

From books and magazines to social media and suggestions from people at art shows, his inspiration comes from "all over the place." Meissner also takes a lot of photographs for reference when he paints.

