

Art in Action at Elmdale School

By Paula Roy

It's hard enough to concentrate with one person looking over your shoulder. Try working with 500 people breathing down your neck! That's exactly what Kitchissippi artist David W. Jones did when he recently spent a week as Elmdale Public School's Artist in Residence.

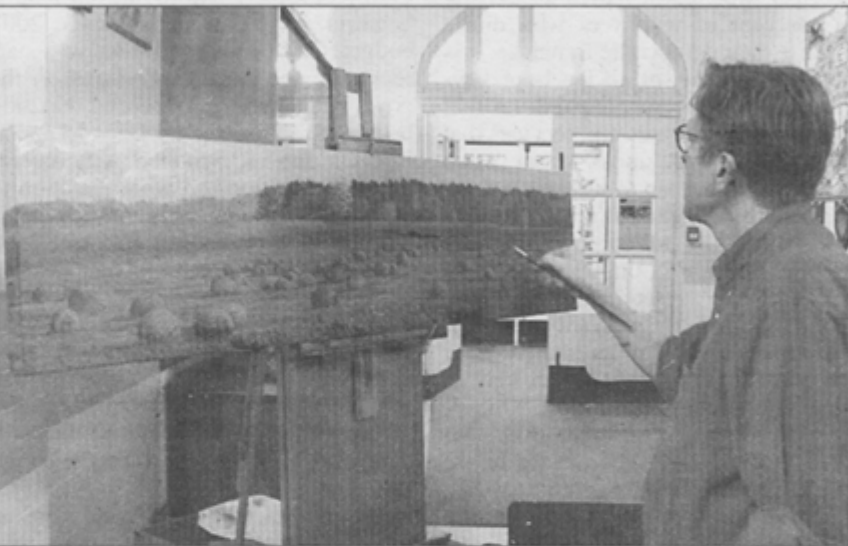
From Nov. 27 to Dec. 1, Jones, a renowned Canadian landscape painter, commenced and subsequently completed a large autumn landscape painting. Elmdale students, staff and parents paid daily visits to his easel to track his progress and learn about the process of bringing an artistic vision to life.

Jones, the father of two young boys, has an engaging manner that contributed greatly to the project's success. His patience for answering students' questions seemed, at times, to threaten his ability to finish the painting by the end of the week, but somehow he managed to maintain the delicate balance between

artist and instructor.

Each day, as students returned to visit, they were amazed at how much the painting had evolved. As early as Tuesday, students began

to inquire if the painting was finished yet. "No, I have three and a half more days to go," said Jones, to which the students replied, "But it's already beautiful."



Working in Elmdale School's front hall, David W. Jones applies the last few brush strokes to the painting he's created under the students' watchful eyes *Photo: Paula Roy*

One kindergarten stu-

dent wondered, "How are you going to get more paint on there when you've used up all the space already?" The concept of layering paint had not yet occurred to many

of the younger students, but by the end of the week, they'd have seen the canvas transformed because of it. In addition to learning about the various processes and techniques involved in creating an oil painting, students also received a valuable lesson in the life of an artist. "Do you ever sell your paintings?" one boy wanted to know. "Yes, I am lucky enough to do this for a living. Isn't that great?" replied Jones. Questions about framing, showing and even transporting paintings were among the many that Jones fielded, often repeatedly, throughout the week.

This is not the first time Jones has enriched the students at Elmdale—he participated in a similar Artist in Residence

experience in February 2005. This time, however, he enlisted the support of two friends in the community to create an on-line diary of the experience. The blog, which

has attracted attention and comments from all across Canada and the U.S., can be found at <http://www3.sympatico.ca:80/holzman/dhh/>.

Reflecting on his week, Jones said, "As with every painting I make, my aim has been to create a successful work that will sustain people's attention for a long time—maybe forever."

After applying his final brush stroke at 3:41 p.m. Friday, Mr. Jones remarked that he was truly impressed with the students' curiosity. "I feel this project has achieved its goal of helping students learn in a very memorable way how art is created." He added, "I hope that it also serves to foster a lifelong appreciation of, and love for, the arts in all forms."