Bob Watkins was a potter for 20 years before deciding it was time for a change. “Carpal tunnel syndrome,” he explains, was one reason that, 39 years ago, he became a realist painter.

In truth, he’d been drawing his entire life. He studied advertising art and design at SUNY and continued his studies at the Rochester Institute for Technology in photo illustration. This was in the ‘50s and ‘60s when modern art was in its heyday. Bob was not a fan.

“Realist painting was not popular when I was going to school,” he explains. “But that’s always been my bend. I’ve always been interested in painters like John Singer Sargent, Anders Zorn, Joaquín Sorolla, and William Henry Innes. I like a painting you can stand in front of and they do something to you.”

His transition into a new media evolved in an unforced way, eventually leading him to Vermont, where a community of fellow artists formed around this shared passion.

“One day I decided to rent a space in Brattleboro. One woman had it as her studio and we’d go twice a month to do portraits. It started with four of us, but by the time it closed two to three years ago, there were 20 people, and we were bringing in teachers and artists from all over the country.”

One of those teachers was Richard Schmid, whom Watkins describes as “the best realist painter in the country.” There have been two John Singer Sargent Medals for Lifetime Achievement since Sargent died, he notes, “This guy got one of them.”

He was eventually invited to paint with Richard Schmid.
“I remember one day the artist Jeremy Lipkin was on one side of me and Richard was on the other, and I thought, ‘What the hell I am doing here? I don’t belong with these guys.’ And a lot of the time I wouldn’t paint. I’d just watch them. That’s how you learn.”

Today Watkins is far from his student days. He works prolifically in his studio in oil, pastel, and occasionally watercolor, and the art-filled walls of the home he shares with his wife of 47 years, Barbara Watkins, owner of Evergreen Fine American Crafts, is a testament to the community of artists in the southern Berkshires they consider friends. “Every piece of art is by someone we know. Stephanie Anderson, Ann Getzinger, Joe Bloger, and Pat Hogan, among others.”

Many are portraits documenting Bob’s own evolving visage.

When asked how he sees his practice having changed over time, Watkins is slightly circumspect. “I don’t know how to answer that. It evolves on its own. Painting is like any skill or craft. You amass a toolbox, but you’re always looking to expand your horizons.”

He gives a similarly considered answer to the novice’s question: How long does it take typically to complete a painting?

“Seventy-four years. What I painted this year, I couldn’t do last year. I’m getting better at technical things, and the more technique you have, the easier it is to tell a story.”

You can find his work at Tilting at Windmills Gallery in Manchester, Vermont, AZ Fine Art Gallery near Boston, and Evergreen in Great Barrington.

And just as the student becomes the teacher, Bob Watkins may yet again share his experience with others in Great Barrington hoping to learn the same traditional techniques that once inspired him – he just needs to find a new barn.
Bob Watkins and his wife, Barbara Watkins

**Support Local Makers**

Great Barrington Arts Market (GBAM) hosts its final winter market at [Saint James Place](#) on Sunday, April 23rd from 10 am to 3 pm.


For more information, write [gbartsmarket@gmail.com](mailto:gbartsmarket@gmail.com) or find them on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/GB-arts-Market-168107320047030/) and Instagram [@gbartsmarket](https://www.instagram.com/gbartsmarket/).

*GBAM’s mission is to provide revenue for Berkshire-based and regional artists & offer locally-made products to consumers year-round.*

**Local Creative Economy Jobs**

Find Berkshire County in-person, remote, and hybrid jobs that pay a minimum of $40K a year in all fields, including arts, education, nonprofits, and related, at [1Berkshire’s The Jobs Thing](https://www.1berkshire.org/jobs-thing/). Among some of the current openings of interest are:

- **Senior Manager of Interpretation and Education, Chesterwood**
- **Development Operations and Database Manager, Shakespeare & Company**
- **Assistant Production Manager, Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center**
You can also find exclusively creative economy jobs, including remote and hybrid opportunities, at MCC's HireCulture. Three sample postings are below.

- **Business Manager, The Majestic Theater**
- **Operations Manager, Berkshire Pulse**
- **Public Programs Coordinator, Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute**

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### Arts Funding and Resources

**Curated information about funding and financial assistance for those working in the creative economy.**

**Funding Opportunities to June 30, 2023.**
Mass Cultural Council highlights grants, action alerts, community events, opportunities, and resources. Find fellowships, explore artists' galleries, discover apprenticeships, and identify art spaces and resources by subscribing to MCC's Monthly Newsletter.

**Artist Opportunities: April and May 2023**
Creative Capital is a nonprofit, grantmaking organization funding artists in the creation of groundbreaking new work, amplifying the impact of their work, and fostering sustainable artistic careers. Examples of current grants from other funders on their site include the Velvetpark LGBTQ+ Visual Artists Residency (Deadline: 5/12/23) and the Eliza Moore Fellowship for Artistic Excellence (Deadline: 5/31/23).

**New England Foundation for the Arts**
cultivates and promotes the arts in New England and beyond. Among their upcoming grants are New England States Touring (NEST) (Deadline: 8/1/23) and National Theater Project Creation & Touring Grant (Deadline: Preliminary applications 9/27/23).

**ArtsHub** is an ever-evolving idea designed to highlight and bring together artists, organizations, and events in the creative communities of Western Massachusetts. Among upcoming events...
of note are English Country Dance Weekend w/Alchemy (Lenox - 4/28/23) and Engaging Nature: Recent Work by the Amherst Plein Air Society (Leverett - 5/6/23).

MASSCreative advocates for a well-resourced and equitable creative sector essential to the economic and civic vibrancy of Massachusetts. See their COVID-19 relief resources here.

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| **What:** Arbor Day Celebration | **When:** April 21 | **Where:** Outside Mason Library (inside in case of rain)  
**Details:** Join the GB Tree Committee in celebrating Arbor Day: Take home a free seedling to plant (courtesy of Ward’s Nursery), get advice from Tree Committee members, and enjoy treats and crafts. |
| **What:** Why We Need Postactivism Today | **When:** April 29 | **Where:** St. James Place  
**Details:** The Schumacher Center for a New Economics will host Bayo Akomolafe for “Why We Need Postactivism Today,” a talk about racial justice, freedom, the future, and the promise of a different kind of politics altogether. The talk will take place in the Great Hall and will be followed by a Q&A and reception. |
| **What:** Afro-Cuban percussionist Pedrito Martinez | **When:** May 13 | **Where:** Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center  
**Details:** “Pedrito Martinez... is a source of rhythmic delight and inspiration... an incomparable performer... a traditional Afro-Cuban music superstar” – *The New York Times* |
Mass Office of Travel and Tourism

The Massachusetts Official Travel and Tourism (MOTT) website includes a FREE business database where you can list your business! To get started, visit their website, where you can sign on as a new business or update your information if you are already registered.

Are you making the most of the #mylocalMA campaign? Submit Your Story for a chance to be featured on social media and in MOTT's My Local MA e-newsletter. You can find more information and resources at Lovemylocalma.com.

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