

# Hart News



Volume 11, Issue 1 May, 2011

## Welcome to Hart News

**So...What is HartNews?** HartNews is my attempt to write about life and watercolor and my view from here - from Costa Rica. As a teacher, I enjoy passing on some of the things I think about or do in watercolor. As a fellow human, I wish to pass on some of the things that inspire me - or make me laugh!. I've sent you this issue - you who are painters, friends, former guests and/or family - some of you without your expressed permission. So...please reply and ask to be removed from this mailing list if you'd rather not get HartNews editions - or just delete me! Originally, I intended to make HartNews a monthly event. Now, more realistically, I see it as a quarterly or bi-annual publication. If you have something you'd like add or say, just [email me!](#) and please feel free to pass this on to your friends... If you'd like to see the back issues - just check the **Archives** on my website - for more demos, etc. - and don't forget to Bookmark this issue.



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## I now have a Blog! *Jan's Front Row Seats*

If you have a mind to, you can check it out at:

<http://jansfrontrowseats.blogspot.com/>

I haven't been very good at keeping it going, but the last four months have been a bit crazy here. The only difficult aspect of the rebuilding process was that the dry season is also when most of my students come to paint and enjoy Costa Rica. Two big week long workshops and five 5-day intensives left only a week between visitors and little chance to rest while the work on the house plodded on. And add in a roof collapse over my bedroom and electronics during a freak rain storm. If you want to read the details of the downpour, just go to my blog. But - I made it - with the help of so many - especially Frank.



*Tree Heart* detail, Jan Hart



*In the Garden*, Jan Hart



detail from Ghost Ranch sketch



*California Hills*, Jan Hart

## Workshops! 2011

**In the states:**

Additional information on each workshop is available on my website,  
<http://www.janhart.com>

### ● *Seattle, Washington*

3-Day Workshop. *Flora, Fauna and Fantastic Color!*

*Saturday - Monday, July 23,24,25*

**Waiting List only.** Email Jan

### ● *Española, New Mexico*

4-Day Workshop. *Painting Life in Watercolor!  
Animals and People!*

*October 3,4,5,6 in the studio \$360/person (\$390 after July 1)  
October 7 - plein aire out to Georgia O'Keeffe's Landscapes! \$75/  
person*

**4 spaces available.** Email Jan

### ● *San Jose, California*

October 17 - 21, 2011

**Please contact Jeanne Rousseau for more information**

[jdecdesigns@msn.com](mailto:jdecdesigns@msn.com) or email [workshops@scvws.org](mailto:workshops@scvws.org)

Workshops! 2012 *Looking Ahead.....scroll on down*

*ITALY*

*COSTA RICA*

*United States....*

# *Painting Tuscany*

Watercolor Workshop with *Jan Hart*

Fall, 2012 at “Le Casacce” near Seggiano, Tuscany, Italy



September 29 – October 13, 2012.

Two full weeks under the Tuscan fall sun

\$3150/person, double occupancy. Single occupancy available.

Join Jan and our host, William Sperling for two full weeks in Tuscany – to paint, dine and absorb the colors, sounds and textures of Italian hill towns and landscapes. Each *plein aire* morning

will send us off to a selected destination for a day of painting and exploring with lunch at a local restaurant. Some days we'll elect to stay 'in studio' at our villa, Le Casacce

<http://www.lecasacce.net/>

We may also include visits to Florence, Assisi and/or Siena. During the workshop, Jan will be providing information, demos and hands on help with subjects such as color, pigments, dealing with light and shadows, using and understanding perspective, architectural and landscape subjects. And each evening we'll enjoy wine and a four course meal prepared by our chef, Endrico Casini.

We welcome participants of all levels of watercolor experience **as well as** non-painting participants who may enjoy some cooking experiences as well as the bountiful sight seeing adventures through this unique opportunity!

Please go to Jan's website at [janhart.com](http://janhart.com) for more information as well as what students say about her teaching.





## *Painting the Colors of Costa Rica*

### Watercolor Workshop with *Jan Hart*

Winter, 2012 in the southern region of Costa Rica - *San Isidro de El General* just down the road from Jan's home, *Casa de Corazon*



### **7 day Watercolor Workshop**

\$1250/person, double occupancy. Single occupancy avail.

One full week, February 12 - 19 , 2012

Email me [here](#) if you'd like to be on the interest list for 2012 or for more information/registration.

Come let Jan introduce you to the colors, sights, sounds and beauty of this little Central American country she calls home - Costa Rica. You'll stay in one of Jan's cabinas or at *Papas de Paramo* hotel and conference center where each morning will find us painting in the outdoor studio above the river - with 80 degree sunny days, soft tropical breezes and surrounded by brilliant colors!. At the outdoor farmer's market we'll each select colorful fruits and vegetables to paint and eat! Of course one day we'll swim in the 85 degree Pacific and one afternoon we'll explore the incredible array of organic plants at Frank's place hoping to taste the beriba and miracle fruit! And we may visit a nearby orchid or butterfly farm. Of course we'll also enjoy the local cuisine of fresh food from the nearby agricultural lands surrounding the city.

## *5-Day Intensive with Jan*

You choose your adventure - **painting, sightseeing or a combo!**



\$1095/person, single occupancy in one of Jan's cabinas at *Casa de Corazon*

Each 5-Day Intensive includes ALL expenses after you get here! Two-three people/Intensive. Dates available in January, March and April, 2012! See what others have said about it by going to my website, [janhart.com](http://janhart.com). And email me for more information!

These intensives helped pay for my outdoor kitchen, studio and cabinas that now are available to my guests! And they continue to help update the house, - project by project! <http://www.janhart.com/Classes%20and%20Workshops2/workshops06.html>



## Simply Living in Costa Rica

*If you...*

- wonder if you could live a simpler life here in Costa Rica
- would like to meet and talk with long term ExPats about their experiences
- wonder what a simpler or greener life looks like
- have questions but don't want any possible 'real estate sale' motivated answers or tours



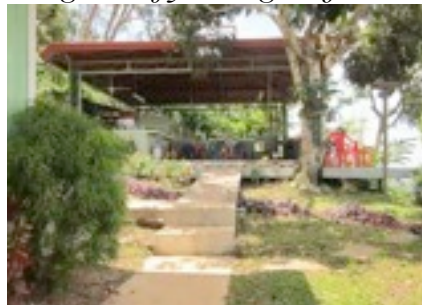
*maybe a tour with Jan and Frank is right for you.*

*Go to [janhart.com](http://janhart.com) and see...*

## Rebuilding the Tico House, *within and inch or two!*

*As 2010 moved into December, my vision was focused on completing the outdoor studio. The skylighted steel structure was ready for some important defining spaces - kitchen, multi use open area for classes, parties etc and an office area... At Anita's suggestion I hired my neighbor, Oscar to help create the kitchen and bar wall. I reasoned that this was also a way to see how he worked and whether or not I would hire him further. I have found that hiring a neighbor is a great way to become a contributing part of the neighborhood and local Tico society.*

*By the end of the year, they were done and I had a wonderful open air kitchen and studio! Breakfast in the studio and kitchen is simply the best- and having birds fly through is just as I like it!*



*Confident that I had found the perfect builder, I took a deep breath and turned my head towards my final big project - the house!*

*The simple Tico house I had purchased 3 years before had served me well – but....now it really needed a lot done. From the time I first saw it, I knew I wanted to rebuild and repair it in accordance with its Tico style even though I had been advised by several just to tear it down and start over. But I truly loved this little Tico house that fits so well in its place overlooking the city and among the other Tico houses scattered below. I decided I wanted to keep the concrete knee walls and floors...and some of the windows...and change just about everything else. I was able to do this for about 1/4 of what it would have cost to build from scratch. \$17/square foot! Not bad at all.*

*Why rebuild the house? Several very good reasons:*

- *35 year old rusty, leaky metal roof*
- *35 year old electrical wiring - dangerous and insufficient*
- *Termites destroying the wood structure throughout*
- *Dark and dingy interior*
- *Periodic flooding in heavy rains*
- *Affordability. \$17/square foot was manageable.*



*I knew about all of the issues except the flooding when I bought the house. I reasoned that the \$50,000 purchase price tag in 2008 would enable me to live here while I slowly built what I wanted. I also knew that the roof replacement (and rebuilding) could only happen during the dry season (January through April). And it made good sense to do all the work needed along with the roof replacement. The time was now – or wait another year. Oscar and I talked about it, agreed on the price which would entail some up-front money for the materials. The labor would be paid off over time. We shook hands and began on January 3. All the work would be done by Oscar, his electrician brother Mario and another neighbor, Alonzo. None spoke English.*

*The next four months proceeded in a more or less orderly fashion beginning at 5 a.m. when I'd bolt out of bed to quickly shower and dress before the crew arrived at 6 – with only Sundays 'off'. I slept and showered in the house and used the new kitchen and makeshift office in the studio. Throughout the ups and downs of the building process Oscar and the crew maintained their senses of humor, warm cordiality and proved their willingness to tackle whatever I needed done. Oscar always replied, 'No problem, Jan!' which was about the only English he spoke. My spanish moved haltingly toward fluency but hand gestures or drawings are still absolutely essential. The only difficult aspect of the rebuilding process was that the dry season is also when most of my students come to paint and enjoy Costa Rica. Two big week long workshops and five 5-day intensives left only a week between visitors and little chance to rest while the work on the house plodded on. And add in a roof collapse over my bedroom and electronics during a freak rain storm. If you want to read the details of the downpour, just go to my blog here <http://jansfrontrowseats.blogspot.com/> But – I made it – with the help of so many – and especially Frank. Finally, finally - the house was more or less finished by the end of April....complete with lots of things I added in as we went!*



*My training in architecture was both an advantage and a disadvantage. I could visualize and I could draw what I wanted. But our communication was still difficult – and not just because of language. My Tico builders had never worked to drawings. Sometimes, after*

*I'd drawn something, explained it with gestures and was reasonably sure Oscar understood what I wanted I would be completely surprised by the result. Sometimes what was built made little sense. For them, 'form not only follows function but completely overtakes it' The outward appearance is absolutely secondary to utility and cost. For me, design is imperative and it must look good as well as function well. So we progressed along in a one step forward, one back and one and a half forward manner toward finish. They put doors in the corner of the room, when just a few inches of space between the wall and the door edge could allow for shelves, trim, etc. They use levels for making sure the horizontal is correct, but often pay no attention to the vertical. And then there is the 1 or 2 inches thing.. one or two inches to spare or one or two inches off... Sometimes I liked the result. And sometimes my architectural eye had to blink twice and squint to take a second look. Then I had to decide how important the issue was to me. And the good news? If I decided I really couldn't live with it, I could ask them to redo it and they would – with the same smiles and words, 'no problem, Jan!' And at \$2 or \$3 and hour, it was affordable. These wonderfully generous, amiable and very practical people just kept getting the job done. Whatever the job.*

*Some generalized Tico building ideas:*

*If you want an outlet in the wall – put it up where you can see it. Anywhere and mostly in the center.*

*Center is more or less center. It can be 1 or 2 inches off.*

*If you want 3 drawers in a kitchen cabinet, you divide the space by 3 and build accordingly. A smaller drawer on top? Why?*

*Rooms should be just large enough for the purpose. Within an inch or two.*

*Windows are for seeing out to people – not for views. The most important windows are those that face the street.*

*My neighbor Anita has a house overlooking one of the best views around – with no windows along that wall. Her windows and door faces the street.*

*So what were the main changes? The footprint, floor and exterior concrete knee walls stayed as built 35 years, the dimensions the same.*

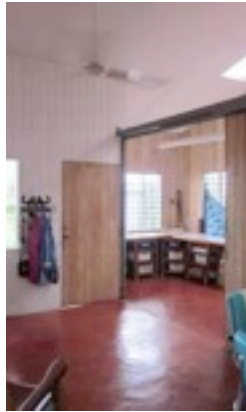
*And the jobs added up..*

- *New steel roof structure with vaulted, insulated (for rain noise) drywall ceilings with two skylights in metal roof.*
- *New car port with metal structure and skylights.*
- *All termite ridden boards removed and replaced by new wood. Additional new wood on interior walls.*
- *All new electrical system – new wiring, grounded and with outlets wherever I needed them and connected to the studio outside and cabins! (The old Tico house had 3 outlets total)*
- *Attic space above the east rooms (bedroom, study and bath) with skylight to keep the attic dry as well as creating 'cocoon' of silence for bedroom and office during heavy downpours.*
- *Wall moved between front bedroom and office to allow for much needed closet space and a more generous bedroom feel and a cozy, compact office.*
- *Bedroom east window moved to create a corner quiet space for the bed and open up the center of the bedroom.*
- *New windows around the house including glass block in bathroom, new kitchen windows and a picture window of the outdoors directly in line with the front door.*
- *Moveable wall between living room and the old study – to create a second bedroom as well as to open the space as needed.*
- *High screened windows at the gabled ends of the house and vaulted living room wall – for good air circulation in this climate that varies from 65 degrees to 84 degrees year around.*
- *New deep overhangs with rain gutters to keep the front walkway and back area dry and to manage water run off.*



- *New carport with steel supports and undulating leaf motif to match the outdoor studio structure, including sky lighting, security lighting and stone water run off catchment*
- *New, larger water culvert beneath the concrete carport floor – to carry water to the street and prevent flooding as well as new concrete catchment behind the house - **NO MORE FLOODING** inside the house!*
- *Interior finish over all walls – vertical t&g wood, natural or painted*

**So here are a few before-after photos**

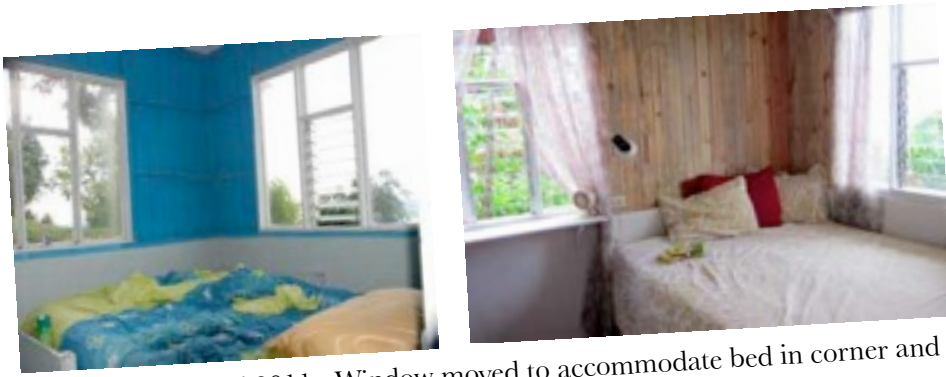


Living room looking toward the front door. 2009 and 2011. Sliding wall open to studio room beyond.



Kitchen. 2009 and 2011. New tile counters, cabinets still to come.





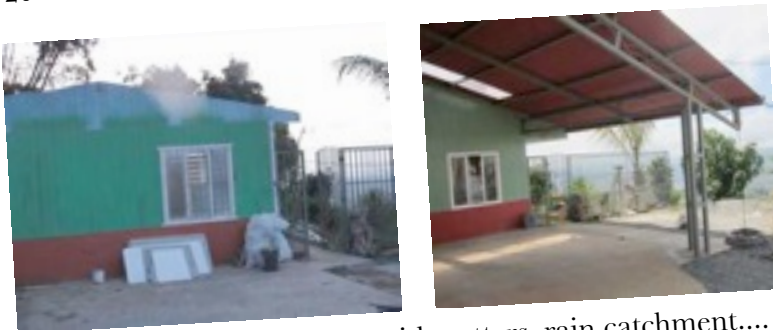
Main bedroom 2008 and 2011. Window moved to accommodate bed in corner and wall moved for larger bedroom.



Studio room corner 2009 and 2011, now a second bedroom beyond sliding doors.



Office 2009 and 2011. Smaller office due to larger bedroom beyond. Daylighting light well through skylighted attic above.



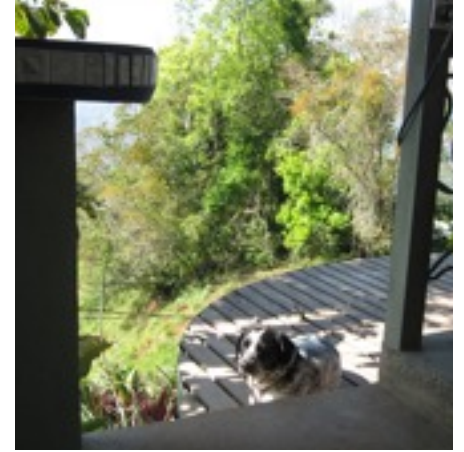
West side of house. New carport with gutters, rain catchment....

## *About the Animals - the ones I know well and those I've just met*

As many of you know, the main underlying reason I selected Costa Rica was about the animals.



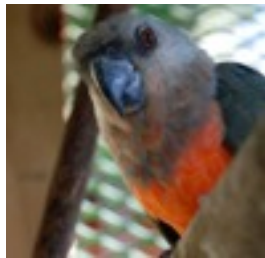
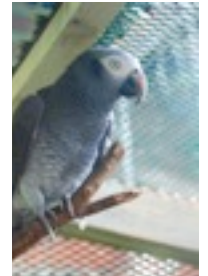
Returning to my roots as an undergraduate Zoology student, I wanted to live my last years with the creatures that make me laugh and smile and wonder. I brought several with me which included 2 dogs and 4 parrots. I lost Livvie, my sweet shepherd a year ago after her long life. And her best pal, Seurat still misses her. But he loves the infinity deck high above the



neighborhood where he can watch the neighbors, check the road, growl at anything that looks amiss and fulfill his ambitions of 'chief watch dog! After Anita, my Tica 'daughter' brought

me a surprise puppy, I thought she'd be a good friend for Seurat - but I've not yet brought her back from Frank's farm, where she is a full grown puppy running through the forest and enjoying her freedom! Since I have such limited space here, I'm reluctant to bring her back just yet. We'll see. Next week she has an appointment to be neutered. Too many unwanted dogs here.

The three parrots I now have in my aviary are doing well. Just before the building project on the house, Xena became ill and eventually died. Neither the Vet nor I could explain her illness - but it was a sad loss for us all,



especially Beak - her longtime friend. The best news is that now Beak has become a great pal of Flash and the two now groom each other and sleep side by side. It is heartening to see Flash, the abused and rescued Senegal finally looking and acting like a confident and healthy parrot! And Beak is his usual talkative and ebullient self! Sage talks more and more and is now he hears! Still

nonetheless my ever amazing friend as *happy bird?* I've given up trying to just answer, *'Yes, I'm a happy bird!'*



refusing to speak spanish, he is he asks each morning, *'Are you a explain species differences....and*

Xena and Beak

My animal pals here include lots of visitors. Some fly in. Some hop. Some crawl in and some just cruise on by.



### *Some of the Fliers...*

There are lots of flying types in Costa Rica. Many (mosquitoes and noseums) are less than popular but contrary to popular belief, we have fewer



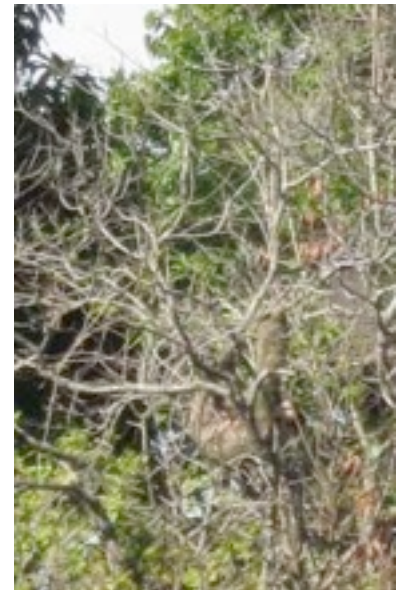
individuals of these species because of so much competition. Still, it only takes one mosquito to ruin a night's sleep... Many of the larger fliers are quite welcome! Both birds and butterflies fly right through my outdoor studio - and I do love it! Take a look at this beautiful butterfly that seemed to be looking for himself in the guide book! And then there is the little Rufous-collared Sparrow I've named Narcisso, who regularly admires himself in all my shiny kitchen gadgets!



*Hoppers...* Hoppers are probably less popular with most folks. Toads and Grass hoppers come to mind. We have some pretty large toads here and it isn't uncommon at all so have 4 or 5 Cane Toads in my studio waiting for moths in the evening - or just outside the door to my house on my porch. I have to remember to close my door at sunset to keep them out of the house. Don't ask me how well I know this...



*The Crawlers or Cruisers....* There is a wide variety of fellow animals who I would describe as crawlers or cruisers. Sloths come to mind since they definitely don't hop, walk, fly or even walk. They slowly move - almost with a fluidity - and mostly in the trees. Several (I believe) sloths live in the trees just below my house and are sometimes visible early in the morning still sleeping out in a crook of branches. Can you spot the sloth on the right? He is hanging upside down with one arm extended



upwards. You might then see his white forehead below his furry forearm. I do love these gentle, almost otherworldly creatures - that move so slowly that their fur turns green with mosses.

There is a new Crawler at my place who I've named Rosey - and I think she is a Rose Haired Tarantula. She stays outside and waits for smaller critters to crawl by. Fine by me as long as she stays outdoors.



Other cruisers are snakes, which are among my favorites, probably mostly because they get such a bad rep by humans as slitherers, slimy, sneaky, etc. They are none of these and actually quite welcome in my gardens. This beautifully colored snake was found at Frank's place and though the markings are similar to those of a boa constrictor, its head shape definitely does not. Not sure what it was other than gentle.



So life continues here in *Pura Vidaland*..

And I'd love to hear from you!



*Jan*

Jan Hart

Artist Teacher Author Adventurer

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*“Life is either a daring adventure or nothing. To keep our faces toward change and behave like free spirits in the presence of fate is strength undefeatable.”* Helen Keller