



# Artist Paul Schulenburg Finds Muse At The Shoreline

by Ellen C. Chahey

Somewhat like a seagull, Paul Schulenburg hangs out at the Chatham Fish Pier. But instead of looking for a free lunch fresh off the boat, the Eastham artist goes there in search of fresh images of fishermen to paint in oils.

A graduate of Boston University's school for the arts, Schulenburg grew up in Schenectady, N.Y., among a family who camped out on the Cape every summer.

"I had a caricature of me drawn in Provincetown when I was about 12," he said with a smile. While still in high school, he won a gold medal in the National Scholastic Art Awards competition. He learned to love it here, and of course the Cape loves artists, so when it became clear that he could make a living as a painter, he and his wife bought a house with a big garage that they have retrofitted into a bright and spacious studio where he often invites other artists to get together for a session with a live model.

"Painting from life is very important,"

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Paul Schulenburg in his studio with one of his portraits of Chatham fishermen. ELLEN CHAHEY PHOTO



## Paul Schulenburg

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he said, and also a lot of fun as people joke and laugh and even sing through a three-hour sitting. About every 20 minutes, they take a break so the model can change position, stretch, or maybe even lie down. In the COVID era, thanks to Zoom, those sessions have gone not only remote, but international. Not long ago, he said, the Cape group had a model in Baltimore, a group in New Orleans, and one artist in Great Britain who wound up visiting the Cape to take one of Schulenburg's workshops.

How did he get into art? He chuckled.

"Well, it's before there were video games," he said, but then explained that he was a "quiet and shy" child, much younger than his two siblings, and his talent for art was "a way to get attention." His gift for art was inherited from a grandfather who often painted scenes from upstate New York and Vermont, he said. And he got interested in the drawings in comic books and cartoons.

Then, when he was about 10 years old, he recalled, a phone book was delivered to his home. It featured a painting, set in Brooklyn, by Edward Hopper – the very artist to whose style his is often compared. An interview with Schulenburg was featured in a recent documentary film about Hopper. The two artists have painted plenty of Cape landscapes.

"I like mud flats at low tide," said Schulenburg, and added, as he pointed out one of his more Hopperesque paintings, "I like boats when they're just sitting on the sand at low tide."

Schulenburg seems in a way to live in his own artwork. He said that when he's not in the studio painting, he enjoys long walks on the flats at low tide, even as far as First Encounter Beach.

Besides Edward Hopper, what are other artistic influences for Paul Schulenburg? He names John Singer Sar-

gent and Joaquin Sorolla as portraitists, and the French Impressionists because they depict "people doing things." Which brings us back to the fishermen in Chatham.

"When I first went to the Chatham Fish Pier," Schulenburg recalled, "I liked the color and the activity, the interesting lighting." Now, he said, he takes "hundreds of photos" of the fishermen "actually in the boat" as he gets ready for another project.

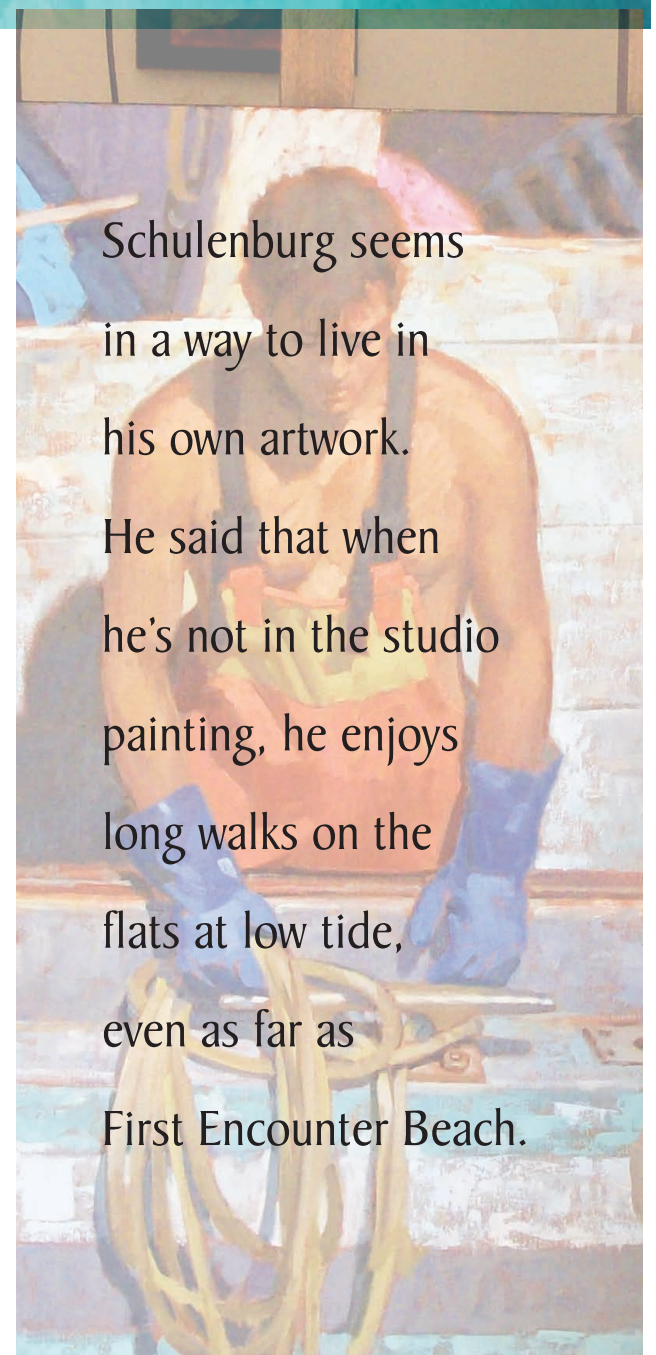
He credits Orleans gallery owner Helen Addison for a lot of his good fortune. "In around 1999, I showed Helen some of my work and she took 12 paintings right away." Ever since, he said, his work is "always on display" at her gallery. Some current Schulenburg art for sale can be seen at [addisonart.com](http://addisonart.com). The artist's own website is [schulenburgstudio.com](http://schulenburgstudio.com).

Either or both sites are sure to have details about an event that Schulenburg will take part in this September in Provincetown. A group will gather at the Mary Heaton Vorse house there to paint the jazz singer Mozelle Androlot, who, he said, might just sing a song or two.

What are some of the artist's interests away from the easel? He and his wife love to travel. Spain, France, Italy, and Utah have been destinations for them, whether to paint or to "visit art museums all day." She is also artistic, and in fact was an art director when they met. Schulenburg is practicing to regain his skill on the guitar, "trying to learn Spanish," and likes to read non-fiction, especially *The New Yorker* magazine. They also dog-sit for friends now and then, after the death several years ago of their pet Sienna, named after a particular shade of brown paint.

Four years in college to study fine arts "was not a good business plan," Schulenburg said with a laugh. But somehow – brains and talent figure largely here, with a seasoning of luck and love – his life lets him strut with the seagulls at the Chatham Fish Pier and afford lunch, too.

"The Cape is a nice place to be," he said.



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