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[A visit with luminist painter Peter Arguimbau](#)

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A visit with luminist painter Peter Arguimbau

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A visit with luminist painter Peter Arguimbau in his Red Barn Art Holiday Show



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Peter Arguimbau poses in his studio at his December 4 Art Holiday Show, next to a luminist portrait of his younger self. Photo by Bob Capazzo.

By Anne W. Semmes

Peter Arguimbau is a noted luminist painter whose works were recently on display at an Arguimbau Art Holiday Show December 4 in his Red Barn gallery and studio in back country Greenwich. Some 50-60 attendees had strolled through the painting-rich Barn.

Standing before one of Arguimbau's glowing landscapes a couple of viewers were receiving historic reads from Arguimbau of other landscape painters of the Hudson River School.

"They painted in a style called luminism," he noted, naming a few – Thomas Cole, Asher B. Durand, Sanford Gifford. Arguimbau described that luminist style as "the last style, the last movement of the Renaissance because they used the same technique as the Dutch masters. Except they painted the great frontier of America, the naturalist movement of America instead of the humanist movement of Europe where they were painting figures and religious subjects."

"When you say they were using the Dutch style or the master style," he was asked, "Is it the pigmentation you're talking about?" "It's the medium that we make the colors with," he answered, adding, "I can show you in my studio."

Arguimbau's studio is positioned to bring in that necessary northern light through its large paned window, he told, and beneath it were all his pigments, his paints, and his paintbrushes. "These are all the colors, the pigments – it's a powdered pigment," he showed. That mix of those pigments includes linseed oil, he said, "It's a formation that the Renaissance painters had, but it took 300 years to evolve, from when van Eyck invented oil painting in 1410." And part of that mix he showed was a cup of glowing amber Thixotropic gel – "a trademark of the Dutch masters" – he uses to create that tonal old masters look.

Arguimbau has spelled out that magical mix he sought out from those master painters in his new book about to be published entitled, "Rembrandt's Lost Secret: My 50-year quest for the painting medium of the Old Masters and a new look at art history." "It's an incredible read," he told, "At 192 pages, it's a page turner," with its artist's palette book cover laid out for all to see.



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A red conte chalk study for a full figure Archangel Michael by Peter Arguimbau. Photo by Anne W. Semmes.

Also, as in those old masters studios there were a number of angels on view, including one featuring a female who had modeled for the painting. Arguimbau shared a chalk drawing study he's done for a full figure Archangel Michael for an unnamed source. And, also striking was a head study portrait of Jesus Christ. "If you see Velázquez's Christ and the Rembrandt Christ," he shared, "Although they never saw each other, they painted the exact same face."

There were some impressive self-portraits of Arguimbau as well, looking a bit like he would be if he lived alongside those old masters. (His book does share he had a studio in Venice in yesteryears.) Add to the mix many beloved pet portraits and in the gallery a majestic folding screen of full-length horses. A price list showed those painting costs ranging from four to five figures reflecting no doubt the considerable work that goes into Arguimbau's artistry.

Missing on view was that colossal painting of the Brooklyn Bridge, that was said to now be gracing a home in Naples, Florida. But a small study of it was on display priced at \$3500. Also missing was that majestic painting of the famed American whaling ship Essex with its approaching sperm whale. The story goes, the Essex had left her home port on the island of Nantucket, when a year later in 1820, it was rammed by a sperm whale and sank. The incident was the inspiration for Herman Melville's Moby Dick. It was good to see though a small copy of that oil painting on sale (for \$3500).

Besides the many luminous paintings of boats and scenes along the east coast there was on view imaginative slabs of Northeast Hardwood Tables by Arguimbau's son Andre. One of Sugar Maple Burl was listed at \$5,500, with an End Cookie Cut Red Maple at five figures. That artistic gene was there with Arguimbau's painter father, his new book tells, and has obviously been passed on to his son.



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Guests at Peter Arguimbau's Red Barn Art Holiday Show peruse his various landscapes. Photo by Anne W. Semmes.



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"These are all the colors, the pigments - it's a powdered pigment," Peter Arguimbau showed of his paint mix. Photo by Bob Capazzo.



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