

Chronology



The Foster family, c. 1946



Tony Foster, c. 1951

*It was a pretty
free childhood.*

1946

Richard Anthony “Tony” Foster is born to Don and Jean Foster on April 2, 1946, in New York, Lincolnshire, England. He has an older sister, April, and a younger brother, Steve. When Tony is nine years old, they move to Essex, where his father is the headmaster of the village school.

1955-62

Foster attends King Edward VI Grammar School in Chelmsford, England. It is a very formal boys’ grammar school that does not support arts education. He leaves school in 1962, at the age of sixteen.

1962-65

Foster works odd jobs to make his way, including fruit picker, grease monkey, solicitor’s clerk, stall holder, van driver, factory worker, and milkman.

1964

At a Valentine’s Day party, Foster meets Ann Margaret Partington; they marry on August 10, 1968.



Ann Foster, age twenty-five

*I think it was love at
first sight probably.*



Tony and Ann Foster on their wedding day, 1968



Tony Foster at Teachers' Training College, 1966



Teaching art at New Parks Boys School, c. 1970

1965

Foster begins studies at Teachers' Training College in Birmingham, England. He completes his studies in 1968.

1966

Foster begins making pop art.

1968-71

Foster teaches art at the New Parks Boys School in Leicester, England.

1971

The Fosters move to the Cayman Islands, where Tony teaches high school art and Ann works as a graphic artist at the islands' newspaper.

1973

The Fosters return to England. Tony teaches art at Fowey Comprehensive School in Fowey, Cornwall.

1974

The Fosters move to Tywardreath, Cornwall.

1976

Foster becomes the exhibition organizer in South Hill Park, Bracknell, England.

In September, Foster's pop art is exhibited in his first major solo show, at the Chapter Art Gallery in Cardiff, Wales.



Exhibition announcement, 1976

1978

Foster becomes the visual arts officer at South West Arts Council in Exeter, England. He continues in this position until 1982.



Working at South West Arts Council

1979–80

Foster's work is featured in the UK publications *Art Monthly*, *Crafts Magazine*, and *Art Review*.

1982

I decided to try and do this as a full-time occupation.

Foster begins to paint watercolor journeys, the first of which he undertakes in southern France with his friend the photographer James Ravilious. The resulting show, *Travels without a Donkey in the Cévennes*, opens at the Curwen Gallery in London in 1985 and launches Foster on his career as a watercolor diarist.



Foster (right) and Ravilious in the Cévennes, 1982

1983

Foster travels to the United States and meets Duncan Robinson, director of the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, Connecticut. He is offered a solo exhibition, which opens at the center in 1985.

Like all idiots I went to New York thinking I was going to take the place by storm.

1984

Inspired by Henry David Thoreau, Foster paints a series of works in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Maine.

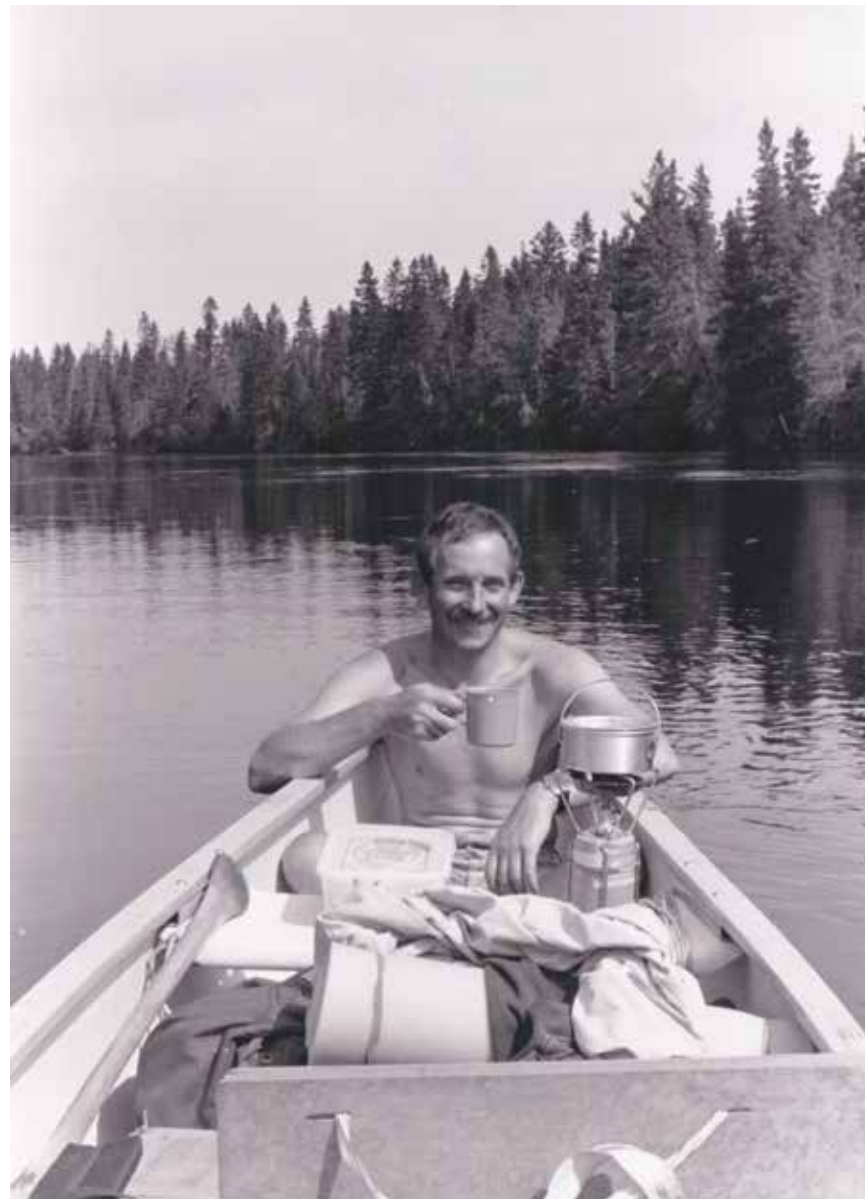


Climbing Mount Kineo, Maine, 1984

1985

In November, the solo exhibition *Thoreau's Country: Walks and Canoe Journeys in New England* opens in London at the Royal Watercolour Society, Bankside Gallery. It then travels to the Yale Center for British Art and the Francesca Anderson Gallery in Boston. Foster's work is featured in the *Boston Globe* and *New York Times*, as well as in the British magazine *Art Review*. In New Haven, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon purchase three of Foster's paintings.

After that, people had to take me a bit more seriously.



Tea break on the Penobscot River, Maine, 1984



Painting Merced River in Yosemite Valley, California, 1986

1986

Foster travels to California to hike and paint along the John Muir Trail, named for the naturalist who tirelessly advocated for wilderness preservation.

1987

On June 6, 1987, the solo exhibition *John Muir's High Sierra: A Watercolour Diary* opens at the City of Edinburgh Art Centre, Edinburgh, Scotland. The show then travels to the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco and the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC. The Edinburgh newspaper the *Scotsman* publishes a two-page report.

Foster exhibits his work *Disused Granite Quarry, Luxulyan Valley* (1986) in *Knowing Your Place*, a group exhibition that opens at the London Ecology Centre and then tours.

1988

Foster travels to the Grand Canyon for the first time.

In the summer, he is awarded the Yosemite Renaissance Prize at an annual juried exhibition of works by contemporary artists that highlight the national park. The US National Park Service purchases his painting *Yosemite Valley to Tuolumne Meadows* (1986).

Television South West (UK) makes and airs the documentary *On John Muir's Trail*, which features Foster.



Painting Death Valley from Aguerberry Point, 1991

1989

A Century of Art in Cornwall opens at the Royal Cornwall Museum, Truro, England. Foster's work is featured in the exhibition as well as in the *Washington Post* and the May issue of *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine.

1990

On January 6, the solo exhibition *Exploring the Grand Canyon* opens at the Newlyn Art Gallery in Cornwall and then tours to Devon, England, and San Francisco, where it is shown at Montgomery Gallery. Foster's artwork is featured in London's *Guardian* newspaper.

In March, Foster returns to California to begin work on *Arid Lands*.



Painting in the Grand Canyon, 1989

1991

In January, Foster travels to Costa Rica, where he lives and works in the rain forest for five months.

Later that fall, his work appears in the French journal *Cahiers de géopoétique* (no. 2).

1992

In November, the solo exhibition *Rainforest Diaries: Watercolours from Costa Rica* opens at Bruton Gallery in Bath, England, and then travels to Harewood House, Yorkshire; Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter; Montgomery Gallery, San Francisco; and the Missouri Botanical Garden, Saint Louis.

1993

Foster's work appears in the US magazines *Art and Antiques* and *Art News* as well as in the UK magazines the *Spectator* and *Art Review*.

1994

In February, Foster is elected a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, London.



Painting in Costa Rica, 1991



Foster (standing) with scientists at Sirena Biological Station, Corcovado, Costa Rica, 1992



Painting in the Idaho Rockies, 1994

From June to October, Foster undertakes a series of hikes in the Idaho Rockies.

1995

The solo exhibition *Wilderness Journeys: Watercolour Diaries of the Idaho Rockies* opens in May at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts and Humanities, Ketchum, Idaho.

In August, the solo exhibition *Arid Lands: Watercolour Diaries of Journeys across Deserts* opens at the Kew Gardens, London. It then travels to various venues in the western United States.

1996

In November, Foster begins traveling to Montserrat and Hawaii for his exhibition *Ice and Fire*.

1998

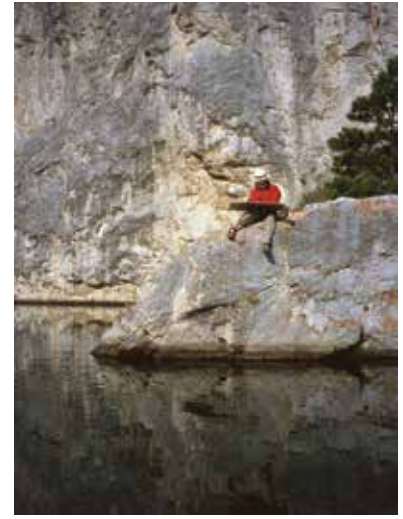
On June 13, the solo exhibition *Ice and Fire: Watercolour Diaries of Volcano Journeys* opens at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, England. It then travels in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Foster's work is featured in two books published in 1998: *The Majesty of the Grand Canyon: 150 Years in Art* by Joni Kinsey and *The Artist and the American Landscape* by John Driscoll.

1999

From July to September, Foster retraces the footsteps of Lewis and Clark in Montana, Idaho, and Washington.

Foster is the subject of a documentary called *Paint the Fire*, made by BBC Radio 4.



On the Missouri River, Montana, 1999

2000

In June, Foster rafts the Colorado River with a group of friends for sixteen days, completing a painting each day. The resulting series, *16 Days Rafting the Colorado*, is purchased in its entirety by the Denver Art Museum.

On July 14, 2000, *After Lewis and Clark: Explorer Artists and the American West* opens at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts, Ketchum, Idaho, and then travels to the Boise Art Museum, Idaho.

On September 29, a major retrospective exhibition, *Worldviews: Watercolour Diaries of Tony Foster* opens at the Frye Art Museum, Seattle, before traveling to Graham Gallery, New York, and Montgomery Gallery, San Francisco.



Painting at the Nevado Sajama volcano, Bolivia, 1997



Painting a lava tube in Hawaii, 1997



At dusk in Greenland, 2000



Escuela y Clinica Tony Foster, Honduras, 2001

2001

Saddened by the devastation wrought in Honduras by Hurricane Mitch, Foster raises funds for the Inga Foundation to build two schools there, including the Escuela y Clinica Tony Foster in Olanchito. Foster continues to contribute money from sales of his work, and he and his collectors eventually build five schools in the Honduran rain forest.

Foster's artwork appears in the spring issue of *Watercolor* magazine.



First viewing of *The Whole Salmon*, Salmon River, Idaho, 2002



Painting on the Salmon River, Idaho, 2002



Painting Kaieteur Falls, Guyana, 2002



Painting Point Sublime in the Grand Canyon, 2004

2002

The Royal Geographical Society, London, gives Foster the Cherry Kearton Medal and Award for his “artistic portrayal of the world’s wilderness.”

In June, Foster rafts 415 miles of Idaho’s Salmon River, from its source to its confluence.

2003

On March 29, *WaterMarks: Watercolour Diaries from Swamps to Icebergs* opens at the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter. The solo exhibition then travels to New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

The group exhibition *The Whole Salmon: A Multidisciplinary Commission Project* opens on August 15 at Sun Valley Center for the Arts, Ketchum, Idaho. The show travels to the Nevada Museum of Art, Reno, and the Prichard Art Museum, Moscow, Idaho, in 2004.

2004

Foster begins work on his largest project to date, *Searching for a Bigger Subject: Watercolour Diaries from Everest and the Grand Canyon*.

2005

The solo exhibition *Into the Wild: Watercolour Diaries from Greenland to Bolivia* opens on October 12 at John Mitchell Fine Paintings, London.



At 17,800 feet on Kala Patthar, Nepal, 2006

2006

In October, *Rocky Days* opens at the Gail Severn Gallery in Ketchum, Idaho. Based on short hiking trips through the Idaho Rockies, the solo exhibition sells out in one hour.

In September, the group exhibition *Yosemite: Art of an American Icon* opens at the Autry National Center of the American West, Los Angeles. Featuring work by Foster as well as by Ansel Adams, Albert Bierstadt, David Hockney, and others, the exhibition travels to the Oakland Museum of California; the Nevada Museum of Art, Reno; and the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art, Indianapolis. Foster's major painting *Eight Days on Eagle Peak Looking East* (2005) is purchased by the Autry National Center.

Foster is the subject of a sixty-minute documentary called *The Man Who Painted Everest*. It airs six times on Sky TV UK and is a British Airways in-flight movie.



Painting on the ponds below Alice Lake, Idaho, 2006



Painting underwater in the Maldives, 2007



Painting in Idaho for *Secret Sites*, 2009

2007

Foster's major painting *From Point Sublime Looking South South East* (2004) is purchased by the Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona.

2008

On February 2, *Searching for a Bigger Subject: Watercolour Diaries from Everest and the Grand Canyon* opens at the Royal Watercolour Society, Bankside Gallery, London. It then travels to Cornwall, Phoenix, and Dallas, as well as to Gerald Peters Gallery in Santa Fe and New York.

Painting at the Edge of the World: The Watercolours of Tony Foster is published by the University of Washington Press. Foster's life and career are the subject of a feature article in the *Wall Street Journal*.

2009

To pay homage to the friendships that sustain him on his journeys, Foster paints the favorite secret sites of his Idaho supporters. *Secret Sites: Watercolour Diaries by Tony Foster* opens at Gail Severn Gallery, Ketchum, Idaho, on July 31.

In November, *International Artist Magazine* publishes the first in a series of six articles about different aspects of Foster's life and work. The magazine runs one article a month until May 2010.

2010

Foster begins to research and travel to the Four Corners region of the American Southwest for work on *Sacred Places*.



Foster and crew on horseback near Canyon de Chelly, Arizona, 2011

2011

Foster begins work on a major series about perceptions of beauty, particularly as it relates to wilderness, and the place of beauty in contemporary art.

2012

On May 18, 2012, *Sacred Places: Watercolour Diaries from the American Southwest* opens at Gerald Peters Gallery in Santa Fe. It later travels to the Museum of Northern Arizona in Flagstaff.

In June, Foster is invited to paint Mont Blanc for the film *Artistes en haute*, which is shown on French television.

2015

In January, the exhibition *Leonardo da Vinci's Codex Leicester and the Power of Observation* opens at the Phoenix Art Museum in Arizona. Foster's painting *From Point Sublime Looking South South East* is exhibited alongside works by Ansel Adams, Gustave Courbet, Harold Edgerton, Leonardo da Vinci, Claude Monet, Eadweard Muybridge, Kiki Smith, Bill Viola, and Edward Weston.



Foster sharing a joke with Nyapun, a Penan tribesman, in Borneo, 2015