



LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

LPAPA Plein Talk Q&As with Colin Page November 2016 Artist Member of the Month

What is your #1 tip or advice for the beginning plein air painter? I think the most difficult part of painting on site can be having lots of people peeking over your shoulder and interrupting, so I always suggest beginners find a very quiet place to work until they gain confidence. I like setting up a still life in the back yard, or finding a quiet corner of a park. It's a good way to start simple and figure out how to handle the changing light, and how to set up your gear. I like to keep the process as simple as possible in the beginning. There's a ton to learn through plein air painting; how to paint more directly, how to capture a sense of light, how to find a more natural gesture in your brushstroke. That's what makes the hassle of painting on site worth it.

What are your never-leave-home-without it “must have” palette colors? I have a standard palette, of a warm and a cool of each primary, plus a few cheater colors. My basic essentials are lemon yellow, quinacridone red, and ultramarine blue, but I have lots of other stuff on the palette these days. My favorite for the last few years has been a color called Alizarine Yellow, from Williamsburg Paints. It's a rich, ocher kind of color. I love how it adds warmth to some of my color mixes, especially greens.

Why do you choose to paint in the wild plein air rather than in the controlled environment of the studio? I love the spontaneity that comes from working on site. Speed is required to capture a fleeting moment in the landscape, and that leads to gestural paint handling. Plein air paintings also have a directness, that I love. The subject has to be simplified to the most essential elements in the scene. A good plein air painting has an honesty to it, where the artist only has time to react to the scene and paint those elements that matter to them. It's the honesty of the experience that keeps bringing me back.

What was your most hair-raising extreme plein air painting experience?

I've had seagulls poop on me. My easel has blown over multiple times. Cars and trucks have driven past me closer than I would like. I've lost a few brushes to the ocean, and had waves almost knock my easel over. I think the most exciting experience working outside was when I was painting in Three Arch Bay during the 2014 Laguna Plein Air Festival with my friend, Jacobus Baas. I was lower on the rocks than he was, with an occasional splash at my feet as a wave came by. About an hour into my painting I felt something touch the top of my bare feet. I looked down to see an octopus stretch it's tentacle across the top of my left foot as it was climbing onto the rock where I stood. Immediately I screamed and

jumped to the other side of my tripod, scraping my leg in the process. For the rest of the week Jacobus called that scratch my octopus bite. Everyone heard about it that week and had jokes for me. Ray Roberts said it happened because it was mating season for Octopi. Even though I was never in real danger, it scared the hell out of me.

Living or not, which artist(s) have had the most impact on your artistic journey? That's a tough one. In the early days I would have to say Monet, but now I think Sorolla is the one who gives me the most ideas of what I want my paintings to do. He has beautiful brushwork, but I'm most interested in how he uses color. He has a complex understanding of how colors are affected by natural light, and I am constantly learning from his paintings.

Closing comments...I'm not sure what else you are looking for, but I'll say this. Jacobus Baas first told me about Laguna Beach and the plein air event many years ago. Up until then I had always just gone out on my own to paint, not knowing about the community of painters all working together on the west coast. I've learned about the great painters who were in Laguna at the beginning of it's time as an art town. I've been to the festival a few times and seen how deep that community of artists still is. The friendship and camaraderie of all those artists is what I love about Laguna and being a member of LPAPA. I'm thrilled to be a member of this group.