



## LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

### LPAPA Plein Talk with Tom Balderas November 2017 Artist Member of the Month

#### ***What is your #1 tip or advice for the beginning plein air painter?***

My thoughts are offered for the plein air painter working in a representational manner.

Be honest. Let the nature in front of you be your guide to that honesty. Do nature justice in your description of it. Trust your eyes and put down shapes of color as they come together rather than using the brush as a linear drawing instrument. It is useful to go from the eyes to the brush and bypassing the brain as a way of learning to state your observations quickly and intuitively. Remember it is the type of light and its qualities that is worthy of describing with your paint. Remember the objects you see before you are merely getting in the way of that type of light and that by putting the colors you see down on the support you will soon be on your way to creating a faithful representation in paint. Work simply and quickly. Paint large shapes before small shapes. Never paint for the frame in mind rather paint with interest in doing nature honor and that work may be worthy of the frame. Be humble and let nature be your guide to color mixtures. Working up color charts in the studio is a wonderful way to learn about color manipulation but be sure you leave those in the studio and let nature guide you... become your color chart exercise as nature will never cease in offering you a better challenge. Relate color shapes. Describe with your paint how the colors you see before you are different from one another rather than how they appear in isolation. Do not worry about how your brushwork appears. Never emulate another painter's style or color mixtures. The world does not need another one of your heroes rather it needs another individual and unique voice. Let your brushwork come from your hand naturally just as your printing or cursive writing appears. Although we may write the same words, each person's handwriting is unique and that is where self-expression lives. It is important to let your individuality and personal vision of what is before you in nature come through in your work.

#### ***If you could only have 5 colors on your palette, what would they be?***

Ninety five percent of the time I work with only 5 colors on my palette. They are aquamarine blue, alizarin, cad red light, cad yellow light and white. I

find that the cad light colors are the most powerful as mixing options. As for the white I use titanium, zinc, permalba, flake, cremnitz and sometimes all of them on the same painting. In my opinion using the highest grade paint no matter which brand is the way to go.

### ***Why do you choose to paint in the wild plein air rather than in the controlled environment of the studio?***

I enjoy working in the studio as I find it appropriate and necessary in the creating of some paintings. I also enjoy working out of doors or en plein air for so many reasons but mainly because being in nature and working directly from her, yields the most honest descriptions of the moment presented. I do not prefer to paint any one particular subject over another or for that matter, any type of light. Being out in the open reveals an infinite number of experiences and feelings. It is important to me to be able to describe those experiences in the most honest way possible. There is no better way to get that honesty in color than from going directly to the source. For me painting from life en plein air reveals the most beautiful color combinations and subtlety a painter could wish to describe.

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

have many stories. One that certainly got my heart beating was an experience I had in the eastern sierras some years ago. I had a trip planned with a friend for about 3 months. I was greatly looking forward to it. It was to be the first time painting in the mountains. One week before we left my friend called to say he could not make the trip. I almost abandoned the trip but my wife said, "You have been waiting a long time to go to the mountains, go even if alone". I did go alone. The very first place I arrived to paint was Lake Mary in the mammoth mountain area. It was early and as I was setting up I lost myself in the setting. I had all my gear set up and paints ready to roll. I had begun the process of observation while doing the setting up. In that state of mind I often become quite oblivious to the noise and distractions about me. It was in that state of mind that I looked over to my right along the shoreline. My body went numb as I realized there were two baby bears and their mamma less than 30 yards from where I stood. The baby bears had that happy-go-lucky sense in their scampering with the mamma pulling up the rear. My knees buckled and I felt the blood drain from my face. Fortunately my truck was a quick hustle behind me. I sat in the safety of the truck wondering just how the heck was I going to get the gear back as the bears waddled by. As the bears drifted from sight I saw a family near the shore to my left. They never saw the bears. As plein air painters it is amazing to me how close we come to animals such as those

and have no idea about it. It probably happens a lot more than we might like to think.

***Living or not, which artists have had the most impact on your artistic journey?***

My father, who recently passed away, was a photographer. He instilled in me the lifelong passion to express myself through the arts. A friend named Zen Del Rio who I grew up surfing with is a painter and shaped most of my boards back when I was young. Joseph Mendez taught me the fundamentals of painting. Marileigh Schulte, a dear friend, confidant, painter and mentor pushes my daily work. I found and will always find the impact in the work of most all the Russian, French and American impressionist painters. The great fauve painters, Monet, Vincent Van Gogh, Cezanne, Morisot, Sickert, Charlton Fortune, Selden Gile, Armin Hansen, Dan McCaw, Degas, Lautrec, Luican Freud, Bonnard, Vuillard, The Bloomsberry group, the f.64 group, Josef Sudek, Frank Benson, Charles Hawthorne, David Park, Elmer Bischoff, Richard Diebenkorn to name just a few that come to mind out of a thousand or more.

If I could only have one pick of who I thought was the greatest painter and who I love the most it would be Andrew Wyeth.

***Any closing comments or advice you'd like to share?***

Thank you for the opportunity to share some thoughts. As well for all the opportunities LPAPA has to offer all its members, myself included!