



LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

LPAPA Plein Talk Q&As with Robin Purcell October 2018 Signature Member of the Month

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

Concentrate on doing value studies until you can see that you have the values right, especially being aware of the subtle differences in the middle values. And being aware of how temperature and intensity can be deceiving. Take photos and use a B & W filter to check values of finished works. I also recommend turning paintings upside down in the field to check values. Any mistakes stick out like a sore thumb. I recommend getting gray scale markers. My first plein air teacher William Ternes had us do at least 3 value studies before starting to paint.

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

I'd use cobalt blue, permanent rose and Winsor yellow for their closeness to primaries and transparency. For landscapes I'd add burnt sienna and thalo blue for their ability to create darks.

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

I like the time constraints, knowing I will be done in two hours or less when the light changes. Painting from life is always better than painting from a photo and since my chosen subject is landscape that's where I paint.

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

During the second day of the 2015 Carmel Plein Air Event there was a downpour so intense my palette became a lake of pale colors and the drying time was way too long. I gathered up my gear and as I drove away something stung me hard on my leg. I shook out my pants and a large red ant fell out, it had probably climbed up to get out of the rain. The welt was large and painful and growing fast so I took a large dose of antihistamine to stop the reaction and fell asleep. The next morning I was still very drowsy but it was sunny so I dragged myself out to paint and told myself I'll just stay two hours and see what happens. I was so tired I was hanging on to the easel for support. And I simplified the scene as much as I dared. This was the painting that won Best Watercolor from Ken Auster. It could never have been painted in the rain. And knowing my energy was limited made me prioritize what had to be put in the painting.

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

William Wendt and I were born exactly one century apart on the same day! I felt like the stars aligned the first time I saw his work it made so much sense to me. Breaking the landscape down into shapes made it possible for me to paint the dry sunny conditions in California in watercolor.

Also Granville Redmond, William Ternes, Fairfield Porter, Glenn Dean, Dean Mitchell

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

I spent a decade painting the hills where I live because that is the landscape I know and love best. Last year I challenged myself to become more adapt at painting at the coast. Keep learning and growing to keep your art strong!