



LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

LPAPA Plein Talk Q&As with Aaron Schuerr November 2018 Signature Member of the Month

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

Investing in a workshop or two is well worth the time. There is so much to figure out early on, from equipment to color how to simplify. Take the time to learn from some artists that you admire.

If you could only have 5 colors on your palette, what would they be? Titanium white, cadmium yellow, yellow ochre, cadmium red, ultramarine blue. If that doesn't work, it's time to run for the pastels!

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

My art is borne of a struggle to comprehend the natural world. I can't tear myself away, so I paint. To react openly and honestly I have to be there. A painting resonates not because it is accurate, but because it represents the relationship of the artist to the landscape. Any good relationship takes time and attention. The studio is a place to sort through the experience of being in the field.

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

This past September I backpacked solo down a remote trail to the bottom of the Grand Canyon to paint for four days. I went to stash my food under a boulder and nearly put my hand in the mouth of an enormous rattlesnake. I was nine-miles and 5000 feet below the trailhead, so a snakebite would have been a serious incident.

I've also had a close encounter with a grizzly in Yellowstone. Fortunately, he stopped at the edge of the river below me and sprawled out in the sand. I watched him clean his enormous claws and was relieved that I didn't have to test out my bear spray.

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

There have been a handful of artist/mentors that have been generous with their time and wisdom. Joyce Lee, Robert Moore, and Matt Smith to name a few. I wouldn't have figured this whole thing out without their help. I'm constantly amazed at how supportive the artistic community is.

Issak Levitan strikes a chord. For living artists, there are too many! I keep stumbling across new artists on Instagram. It's inspiring and sometimes intimidating!

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

At times I lose perspective on how amazing it is to be able to get up every day and explore creative ideas. I get caught up in emails and deadlines. I worry about sales. I assume that everyone else has this art thing figured out. But then I head out of town and put a few scratches on paper, and I'm renewed. Painting is a wonder. I hope I never take it for granted.