



LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

LPAPA Plein Talk Q&As January 2019 Signature Member of the Month

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

Paint small canvases (6x8 inches or so) with a limited palette. As artists, especially in the beginning, we make things far more complicated than it needs to be. For me, the whole point of outdoor painting is to capture fleeting light and atmosphere, and when we have a larger canvas and dozens of colors to choose from it can make the process very difficult and overwhelming. By the time the canvas is covered the light has changed, and we have a tendency to “chase the light” in a painting, which changes the original idea. Stick to the original plan and shadow patterns and see it through. I find this much easier on a small canvas.

I find I am not as concerned with failure when I paint small. By painting small we begin to see how all of the elements (design color, value, etc.) work together as a whole.

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

4 color limited palette - Winsor Newton artist oils

cadmium yellow light
alizarin crimson
ultramarine blue
pthalo blue or green

My outdoor palette - Winsor Newton artist oils

Cadmium yellow light
cad red light
alizarin crimson
ultramarine blue
cobalt blue
viridian
sap green
titanium white
(Occasionally I add Gamblin's Portland grey light, medium and dark)

Sun thickened linseed oil as a medium

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

For me personally, my outdoor work is a vehicle for larger studio work. When I paint plein air now, I have an attitude of gathering information and studying nature rather than coming away with a finished painting to put right in to frame. I keep many of these studies, and have a library

of reference now to look at when working on studio paintings. Photography can be a great tool for gathering reference, as long as it is combine with our direct observation of color and atmosphere from nature through painting en plein aire. When I paint outdoors, I am bringing that experience (not just a painting) back to the studio.

There are also many effects that cannot be achieved in a wet painting in one sitting, such as glazing and scumbling over dry paint. The process of developing a painting over a longer period of time and having the ability to come back to it with fresh eyes is an important part of the process for me.

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

I had a moose walk up behind me on Silver Creek in Idaho. A fly-fisherman was yelling at me from a distance and I thought he was telling me not to scare the fish, I turned around and there was a moose 10 feet behind me.

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

There are so any great artists working today, but for me Clyde Aspevig is at the top. When I stand in front of one of his paintings, I can feel the air. He also has an amazing ability to convey realism through a very abstract use of paint. This all comes from the time he devoted to experiencing the landscape firsthand.

Recently, I've found a lot of inspiration from the digital concept artists working in animation. They are so creative, and they really understand how to use shadow and light effectively.