



LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

LPAPA Plein Talk Q&As with Stewart White April 2019 Artist Member of the Month

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

Keep it simple! Simple equipment. A simplified palette of colors, a simple subject to paint and an overly confident attitude.

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

Only 5 colors!?? Ok I said keep it simple so here it is; ultramarine blue, yellow ochre, carmine, vermilion, and cobalt turquoise. (if you are painting in oil replace vermilion with white).

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

A studio painting refers to photographs and memory and maybe some on site sketches. While painting outdoors the element of time becomes a factor. Shadows change ever so slightly. Observation is more comprehensive and inclusive. Life happens during the process that is to say what might first have attracted one to do a painting evolves and surprises with a passing of un expected events. An exciting effect of light and shadow, a compelling narrative, a new cast of characters that shape the composition. None of these events can take place in the studio.

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

I cannot recall a hair-raising experience but I do have an anecdotal story about perception and self-consciousness. While painting outdoors, once, I sensed out of the corner of my eye a figure standing very still and watching me work. For nearly 45 minutes I painted with an air of wanting to impress. Instead of focusing on the scene before me, I became intent on putting on a show knowing how keenly I was being observed. It wasn't until I paused to acknowledge my silent and patient audience that I realized I was being observed by a human shaped tree stump. It taught me a great lesson that helps when I am asked to do a demo. I imagine the audience is all made up of tree stumps and then I can relax. And secondly not to take myself so seriously.

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

I would have to say in watercolor I have learned more from Joseph Zbukvic, John Singer Sargent than anyone else. As to painting in general, Fred Cuming and Vincent Van Gogh inspire me for how not to be a slave to the "look" of nature but to paint with the freedom to emotionally respond to nature. Not that my work resembles their work but that the "spirit of interpretation" is present when I paint.

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

Thank You LPAPA for asking me to comment on these excellent questions. I like to think that we are all students until we can no longer pick up a brush. It seems to me a tragic thing to be forever identified with a particular style or subject matter when there is so many infinite possibilities to explore. Plein air painting is that vehicle that makes exploration possible. In travel it opens doors to conversation and in nature it opens doors to quiet love and fascination with the natural world.

*Kind regards,
Stewart*