



# LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

## LPAPA Plein Talk Q&As with Lyn Boyer June 2019 Artist Member of the Month

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

If you're just starting out on your plein air journey it's good to take the time to get some of the basics under your belt. You'll avoid a lot of frustration if you have at least a rudimentary understanding of the core skills - drawing, perspective, composition, values and color. Okay, you're ready for your first adventure! Gather your equipment and have a thorough understanding of how to set it up. Make a list! Check that you have everything and it's properly organized before you head out. Keep it simple. Choose only a tiny slice of the expanse around you. What first caught your eye? What may have potential as a subject? Take your time. There's no hurry. Build your skills solidly. It's okay to come home with just a good start, a value study, a block-in or even just a connection with a place and a plan to go back. Enjoy yourself. Be curious. Relax and tune in using all of your senses. Above all give yourself permission to study without the need to perform. Come home with an experience and some new discoveries. Seek out a skilled mentor to help guide you. And by all means, no matter what happens on your canvas, enjoy the experience.

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

Titanium White, Cadmium Yellow, Cadmium Red Medium, Ultramarine Blue, Transparent Red Oxide

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

I find painting 'en plein air' and responding to the world through direct observation is something I must do. It's not an option for me. It requires using all of my senses and demands such a fierce focus in the face of the changing environment that it connects me to my subject in a way that is impossible in the studio. The very present and visceral memories I bring back with me are what I call on to give life to my studio paintings. We spend so much time 'one step removed' in modern society that spending the time and focused attention to truly see something, watch it change over time and capture our impression of the moment in paint is deeply personal. It feeds the soul. The very act of plein air painting commits the day to memory in a way that is unique

and permanent. Unlike other days that blur together or fade from our memories, a day painting can be recalled with a vividness that is magical. We build a library of experiences that are forever at our fingertips waiting to be re-visited.

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

I'd have to say two actually. One standing alone in the desert, the other alone on a mountain. I've realized that normally wise and reasonable adult painters get themselves into these pickles for one reason. Plein air painting requires such focus that we literally tune out everything around us.

The desert. I stop for an amazing scene. Hot day, short shorts and flip-flops. Choose my spot, set up gear, pick up my brush, dig into a pile of paint. I have a strange feeling and start screaming like a girl. The scene was so darn mesmerizing I never bothered to look down. When you set up your gear on a massive ant colony in the desert it will totally piss them off. You are the enemy. They will swarm up your bare legs. A freaking sea of ants with chomping mandibles. Yeah, that. A whole lot of jumping around, hollering, screaming...

The mountain. Gear on back, hike up a trail past a lake through the trees. Set up in a meadow at 10,000 feet. I forget one important thing. Be off the mountain before noon during monsoon season. Who the heck knows when noon is anyway when you're in the 'zone' and time has ceased to exist. While I stood at my easel facing my seriously 'Bob Ross' scene full of happy trees and puffy white clouds there was no painting buddy to tap me on the shoulder and say, "Ummm....errrrr....uhhhh....". The rolling black wall from hell had silently come over the ridge and was thirty seconds from being right on top of me. Knowing that being the only thing in a meadow at 10,000 feet with a whole lot of pointy metal equipment, this was an 'I could die' moment. All of my practice on how fast I could pack my equipment kicked in. Two minutes later - the ghost riders coming, lightning starting to crack and the storm devouring the sky I literally ran at what felt like light speed off the mountain helped by gravity with gear on back. Okay, my thinking may have been flawed. I don't think you can outrun lightning but knowing there was no place safe on the top of that mountain I was going to prove physics wrong and live to tell about it. And, I have NEVER made that mistake again.

Though we are often like the bear who went over the mountain to see what he could see, don't

forget to notice the pearls right at your feet. You can plein air paint in your back yard! Look for the jewels that other people overlook.

And better actually not to encounter hair-raising plein air experiences. There's no shame in staying alive! So look down while setting up and check over your shoulder while painting! Have fun and...paint wisely my friends. ;)

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

John Singer Sargent, Joaquin Sorolla, Van Gogh, Paul Gauguin, Maxfield Parrish, JC Leyendecker, Thomas Hart Benton, Edward Hopper, Jack Levine, Richard Diebenkorn, Bernie Fuchs, Mark English, Alan Cober, Steve Huston

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

Why do you paint? Always be answering a question. Let curiosity drive you. Give up the pressure to perform for the pleasure of your practice. Performance will come when you're prepared. Create a life-long habit of doing focused study. Build your skills. Paint with intention. A personal voice and freedom of expression will grow naturally from a solid foundation. Take time to enjoy the many pleasures of our craft - connecting with our subject, handling our brushes, mixing that pile of stunning Ultramarine Blue. And, in those moments when the stars align and everything goes right, stop, take the time to take it in. Enjoy the feeling. Congratulate yourself on a step forward.