



LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

LPAPA Plein Talk Q&As with Kathleen Hudson November 2019 Signature Artist Member of the Month

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

Don't be tempted to attempt to paint the whole view, even in the most beautiful of places. Zoom in on the thing that grabs your interest and study it—consider the light, atmosphere, and subtle color shifts you see. You can use quick thumbnail sketches to consider some options for your composition.

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

I typically carry 10-12 colors from Michael Harding, but my mainstays aside from Titanium White are: Indian Yellow, Magenta, Transparent Red Oxide, Ultramarine Blue, Phthalocyanine Blue Lake, and Neutral Gray. Rich transparent colors like the pigment colors above can be mixed to create almost any color on the spectrum, while I like having a mid-gray on the palette for the sake of convenience in mixing and to keep my values in check under various lighting conditions.

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

I do enjoy both, but I learn more from painting on location and find it informs & improves my larger studio work.

When I paint outside, I see movement that a still photo can't capture. Nature isn't static, and my plein air paintings can capture a sense of moving light and atmosphere that would be impossible if I'd only ever painted from photos. I also see subtle shifts in color temperature outside that a camera flattens. Some folks get discouraged about the challenges of painting outdoors (and those challenges are real!)—I try overcome these by setting expectations for my plein air paintings that align more with study than with creating a perfected piece each time. If I am painting a larger work outside or painting in a festival, I give myself plenty of time and use small sketches to create a painting with higher level of finish.

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

A few folks have heard about my elk encounter in the Colorado Rockies, which mercifully remains my craziest plein air experience to date. I told the full story (with photos!) on my blog: <https://www.kathleenbudson.com/blog/2017/6/7/the-wild-story-behind-that-timberline-falls-painting>. The short version: on the return from painting at Timberline Falls, I came upon a couple of tourists unwittingly riling up an elk cow as they took close-up pictures of her calf. They got away after I shouted a warning to them, and I cautiously proceeded down the trail after waiting a few minutes for the elk to move further away from the trail. But when I passed the place they'd been standing, the cow elk returned and tailed me down the mountain for several nerve-racking minutes.

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

I started painting in oil after seeing the Sargent exhibition in the National Gallery in the late 1990s. I was 12 and decided to pick up the medium by copying several favorite paintings of his —so I'd say his influence has been there from the start.

Now as I meet lots of artists during plein air festivals, I find that my vision continues to evolve based on what I learn from fellow painters. Painting is a visual language, and I believe we all grow more fluent as painters when we talk about our work and paint together.

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

Whether you're new to painting or have been painting for years, I hope you give yourself some time to reflect on what you love painting most and why that subject draws you in. You'll probably go through different phases in your artistic journey, but look for common threads to see what makes your vision your own. This is especially key if you're struggling to find a sense of purpose or direction in your work. I mentioned above that art is a visual language; you paint because you have something to say, a story to tell. I'm looking forward to following your work and seeing what that story is!