



# LAGUNA PLEIN AIR PAINTERS ASSOCIATION

## LPAPA Plein Talk Q&As with Thomas Bucci May 2020 Artist Member of the Month

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

Don't hesitate to try it if you feel the call. It doesn't take much to get started. It could be as little as a piece of paper and a pencil. A lot of artists have done incredible work with no more than that.

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

In most paintings I limit the colors to some variation on the 3 primary colors, plus a dark neutral, and a white used for highlights and producing tints. My favorites: (Red) Quinacridone Burnt Orange, (Yellow) Raw Sienna, (Blue) French Ultramarine, (Black) Shadow Violet or Lunar Black from D. Smith, (White) Chinese White.

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

When referencing your subject, there's just no comparison to painting from life. There are several kinds of reference materials I use, listed in order of my preference from least to most they are: photos, memory, imagination, sketches made on site, and working from life. Much of the time I use multiple references. Being there, and seeing the subject in front of you is well worth any inconvenience; weather, insects, whatever. However, I try not to judge my paintings in comparison to the scene in front of me. When looking at them later on with a critical eye, away from the source, I can assess whether my effort has been successful or not.

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

Nothing scary has ever happened to me, just the usual stuff I guess. Sometimes people are suspicious of what I'm doing or just want to chase me away from their property or storefront, or officious people in uniforms who give direct orders to move shop. I try my best to win them over, with mixed success. And of course, there's the occasional sidewalk art critic. But the overwhelming majority of experiences meeting people while painting are very positive. One of the most common wise-cracks from passers by is, "did ya get me in your painting?" I now ask them if they would be willing to back up 20 feet and hold the pose for 15 minutes, if they want to be included. One time a guy took that seriously, and actually posed for me. He has since become a collector of my work! 😊

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

There's too many contemporaries to mention. Classically it's the British or watercolorists working in Britain such as; Joseph Mallord William Turner, James Abbott McNeill Whistler,

John Singer Sargent, Richard Parkes Bonington, John Blockley, and Arthur Melville. I saw Turner's work when I was an architecture student and that reignited the passion I had as a teenager for watercolor. I was studying in London in 1988 and went to see a recent addition to the Tate Gallery by noted architect James Stirling. I was disappointed by the building, but unbeknownst to me it housed their Turner Collection, and I was immediately smitten with his work. It was one of those moments where you know without a doubt that something very significant has just happened to you.

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

#### Why I Like Participating in Plein Air Competitions...

In athletic competition, athletes tend to view each other primarily as adversaries. "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing," goes a well known quote. Plein Air events have a competitive aspect, but mainly it's just about painting. In the end, you have the reward of a week of completed and framed work.

Of course artists want to make sales and win awards, but that's not the reason to participate. For me and I'm sure many others, it's about getting out and working as hard as you can to produce paintings to the best of your ability, and then to go beyond that. Continuing with the sports metaphor, track & field athletes tend to run their best times in the Olympics rather than at a local time trial. The best competition drives everyone a little harder. That's my main reason to participate in competitions, and I think that explains the high caliber of work produced at these events.