

Tip #91

Painting on the Spot!



I love plein air painting, with all the challenges-and frustrations!-that go along with it. Just being OUT there is worth all of that, to me-away from the studio, the phone, email, laundry. Whether I'm painting in nature or in a more urban setting, working on the spot holds a special appeal to me. Light changes rapidly-and so can the weather! Our time is usually necessarily shorter than we might spend on a similar subject in the studio. Even being uncomfortable can help us to paint more quickly and spontaneously!

Art 91-1, Sunset Sketch

One thing that often helps me is to use a larger brush, when painting plein air. I like at least a #6 or #8 round (with a good, springy point, like Loew-Cornell's affordable white nylon brushes, oddly called "Round Stain" brushes.) A 3/4" or 1" flat brush has a permanent place in my plein air gear as well. Sometimes I don't even sketch my subject on paper first, just jump right in with these nice, juicy brushes, as I did here.

(To see much more on the fast tricks and techniques I used here, see my newest YouTube video -- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rVTZ6S0wg-4&feature=channel_page)



Art 91-2, Rivershack

But if it helps you to capture the scene you want, don't hesitate to use some simple pencil guidelines or even a quick, loose ink sketch, as you see here. You can see how far I got on the spot, on a sunny day with emphatic shadows.



Art 91-3, Stone Shack



Later, when I got home, I added a bit more work from memory ... we were running out of time for painting on the spot, but I'd paid close attention to details while we were there.

DO look for the shadows, and if you can, sketch or paint them first-they're most likely to change, in the landscape, and that may be what attracted you to the scene in the first place.

Simplifying shapes and forms works beautifully here ... if you haven't seen Enrique Flores work of this time, I encourage you to visit his marvelous sketchbooks on YouTube -- <http://www.youtube.com/user/acuarelista>, or his website!

And do be aware of what's going on around you-look up and around every once in a while! Use sunscreen, even on a cloudy day, if you burn easily. Use insect repellent, if you need to, but keep the DEET off your plastic palette or your hands! It will interfere with painting...

...but above all, have a wonderful time, far from life's other distractions.

Please visit our new group blog, Sketching in Nature -- <http://naturesketchers.blogspot.com/>, and my gallery blog -- <http://cathyjohnsonart.blogspot.com/>, where I'm now offering frequent mini-demos!

Check in for the latest on Facebook, here -- <http://www.facebook.com/cathy.johnson1>!

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