

Tip #68

Finding Beauty Wherever You Are

Sometimes we feel that we need to make a special trip to find something to paint—a magical landscape vista, a charming coastal town, the perfect oceanside view. And of course that's wonderful...but we can't put off making art until we find that inspiring, elusive perfection.

And why should we? If we open our eyes to the beauty all around us, we'll never run out of subjects to paint. The ever-varying magic of light, composition, value, mood, interest—all those can be found in the most modest of surroundings, every day.

I've painted the weathered trunk on my cabin deck, my neighbor's trash heap (believe me it was beautiful, seeing that stuff go away!), a closeup of my woodpile, even a still life of dust masks in our rehab project...the basics of composition, value, and feeling still make the painting!

*Tip: To help you zero in on a composition, try cutting a rectangle in a scrap of cardboard ... hold it up at arm's length, first horizontally, then vertically. Move it closer and farther from your face ... you're almost sure to notice something worth capturing on paper!

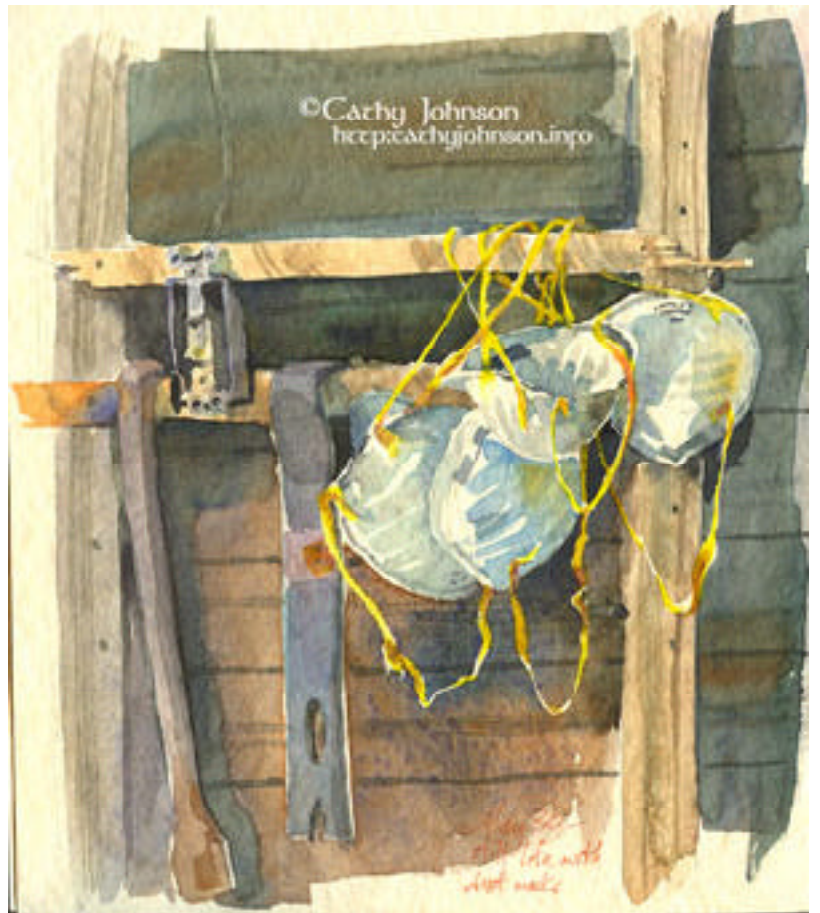
Frustrating, isn't it? And of course you can't make art without the wherewithal, can you?

Well - of course you can! The cave artists at Lascaux didn't have access to Daniel Smith, Dick Blick, or Jerry's Artarama, and you shouldn't let a little thing like not having the Proper Art Supplies stop you, either, when the spirit moves you.

I once found myself out on a ramble with my sketchbook but nothing to draw with - happily, I had just passed the remains of someone's campfire, just full of bits and pieces of burned wood. The light bulb went on - that's charcoal! The landscape drawing ended up as an illustration in one of my first art books!

Art 68-1, "Still Life with Dust Masks"

I'm delighted I noticed these masks hanging there when we left our demolition work on Memorial Day ... I came back and painted them later! (If you'd like to follow some of the thinking behind this one, I put notes on it in my Flickr album, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/25146557@N00/521732013/#comment72157600287396005>.)





Art 68-2

Art 68-2, "Going Away"

Sometimes how you feel is the real subject of your art! In this case a longtime frustration with a local mess just had to be captured in my journal when we bought the house we're rehabbing, above!

Art 68-3, "Woodpile," quick sketch

If something catches your eye, try to take time to get at least the bones of it down on paper. This little sketch was no more than a thumbnail, done in dark gray colored pencil and quick watercolor washes, but it may turn into a painting someday...

If you haven't explored the Daily Painters site, <http://www.dailypainters.com/index.php>, check it out ... many of the artists there focus on just that ... the everyday. (I'm not a member because I don't paint works for sale every day. I like to record and honor my everyday life in my journals ... perhaps someday I'll have more time!)



Art 68-3

Be sure to look for my NEW CDs for artists in my Cafepress store, http://www.cafepress.com/cathy_johnson, and watch for my fine arts auctions weekly on eBay, <http://members.ebay.com/aboutme/cathyjohnsonart>.