

What is Plein air Painting?

Plein air painting is often only partially understood. Contrary to current market abuse of the word it is not synonymous with Impressionism and quick sketching. It is finished painting done by a painter who paints from life, on-site, from start to finish with only minor work being done in the studio. The artist, however, is doing more than painting outdoors he/she is capturing a moment in time of some transitory aspect of the landscape, seascape or figurative work. A vanishing mist on the land, a shadow cast from a passing cloud, the movement of wheat in the wind, the moment of a fisherman casting a line or raking in a catch, or a wave rolling into surf. It can also be the extended development of a painting over a period of days or weeks at the same location and at similar times in order to develop a larger scene or more detailed piece. In either case it is impossible for an artist to claim he/she is painting en plein air without the recognition of nature's transitory aspects... The combination of the elusive qualities of light, the battling of wind and weather changes, cloud movements, waves movements, trees rustling... All this demands that the artist capture a subject's essence and hence requires that the artist know a great deal about the subject. All these things work against the artist if he/she has not already mastered the medium.

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Segments have been published by the
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