

PASO ART SCENE

DENNIS CURRY

IT'S ABOUT PLEIN AIR PAINTING

By Dennis Curry



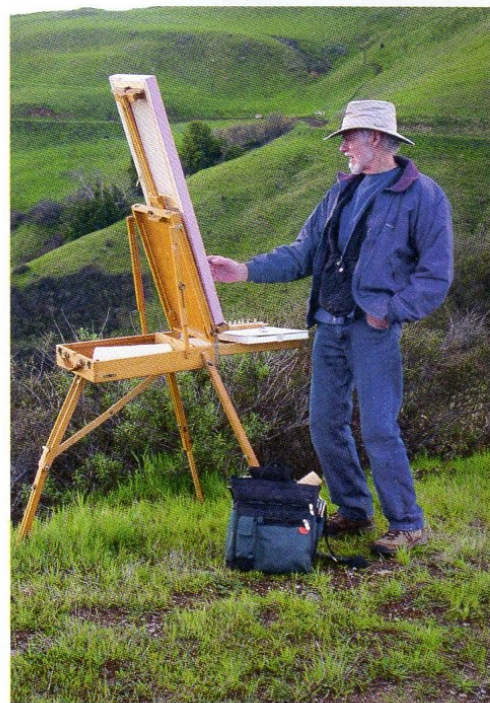
TO PAINT OR DRAW A SUBJECT IS TO OWN IT IN A way unlike any other. I discovered this as a boy taken to exploring nature and seeking my connection to it all. I can truly say this discovery has served me very well on life's journey in a remarkable world.

Over the past few years I have been doing more painting on location. This style is called Plein Air, or "open air," referring to creating a work of art outside. As a member of SLOPE (San Luis Obispo Outdoor Painters for the Environment) I have worked with the Land Conservancy raising funds for the Pismo Preserve, Dana Adobe, and Pacific Wildlife Care as well as ventured into new areas of interest with fellow painters. Most recently I was invited by the SLO Museum of Art to participate in their Point Buchon Trail Plein Air Exhibition. In October I spent a week as a guest of the US Department of the Interior for an Artist in Residence at the Whiskeytown Shasta-Trinity National Recreation area in northern California. This was my first solo Plein Air experience and I found it quite wonderful to be able to indulge in complete spontaneity in exploring and choosing painting locations.

One of the challenges I have always found with Plein Air painting is in deciding where I want to settle down and paint. For most of my 50 years as a professional artist I have relied on the camera to record things of interest and then had the luxury of working in my studio to compose my image. This allowed me to more thoroughly explore new areas and give me a greater understanding of the environment, as well as gather a lot of reference material. By going out with other artists, I learned to pick a location and get with the painting.

Working on location gives the advantage of spending hours with one scene and experiencing the changing light and moods of the spot and perhaps meet some of the wildlife as they go about their business. This way I have found the ability to stay in one spot continually for hours in nature, to become involved in the timeless process of painting, submerged in and surrounded by my subject.

When painting on location I concentrate first on sketching out the important elements of the composition and their relationships and movement. This is where I find the advantage of Plein Air. The freedom to adjust compositional elements comes much easier than when using photo reference. I really can keep in the knowledge that it's just a random set of shapes and color and can be played with as is my fancy, (artistic license). I will generally spend 2 - 4 hours



at a given location concentrating on establishing the composition and values not worrying too much about color. I try and take a photo every 1/2 hour or so which gives me valuable information about how the light moved and what time of day I want to concentrate on in finishing the painting. It's a level of freedom with my work that feels quite singular.

When I left the African Safaris behind some 20 years ago after many visits as a printmaker I decided the next visit I wanted to go back as a painter and concentrate on working Plein Air. This June I hope to have an artist in residency in Kenya along the Mara River. It will be a dream fulfilled.

I am a resident artist at Studios on the Park, 1130 Pine Street in Paso Robles, displaying and hosting a wide variety of art and artists creating in their resident studios. Please come by and view my latest works along with selected work from my 50 years as a professional artist.

Studios is open Monday- Wednesday 12-4, Thursday and Sunday 12-6, Friday and Saturday 12-9. For my current weekly hours either check the website studiosonthepark.org and click on my artist link or feel free to contact me at dennis@denniscurry.com

