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ART WORKSHOP RETREAT

Lois Griffel

PAINTING THE IMPRESSIONIST LANDSCAPE

May 31-June 5, 2020 (Four Teaching Days)

Returning for the 4th year in 2020

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Painting the Impressionist Landscape workshop is an exciting approach to seeing and painting color and light outdoors. It is important to know what you will need and what to expect. Bringing the right things for a location workshop will not only make the experience more enjoyable, but helps you to eliminate a lot of unnecessary packing and carrying. Please remember that these are suggestions. Feel free to bring additional colors, easels of your choice; whatever it takes to make you comfortable.

COLORS

Because I will encourage you to explore color boldly and fearlessly, you must feel free to experiment with paint. Although you always get the best results with top quality professional pigments such as Winsor-Newton, and Rembrandt oil paint, you may also choose their less expensive versions. All art catalogs indicate the different grades of paint. These are generally more desirable than the very cheap, generic brands that you might find in your art supply or hardware stores.

Because they are not standardized, names of colors may be different than those listed here. I will explain them in detail in order to help you make your selection.

My main palette colors are in bold. 2 stars are optional. . It is not necessary to buy all of them, unless you love color as much as I do!

*Cadmium Yellow Pale - This warm, luminous yellow is the primary yellow of the color wheel.

*Cadmium Yellow - It is darker in value than Cadmium Yellow Pale and lighter than Cadmium Orange.

Cadmium Yellow Deep - darker and warmer than Cad Yellow

*Cadmium Orange - Cadmium orange is a true secondary color.

*Cadmium Scarlet (warm red) - This should be a vibrant cherry red pigment

*Permanent Rose A true, transparent rose color.

*Alizarin Crimson

*Permanent Magenta - These colors are transparent One is warm and the other is cooler

*Purple Any pigment with the name Magenta, Mauve, purple or violet .

*Ultramarine Blue - This is a dark, transparent blue

*Cerulean Blue - This relatively warm blue.

Cobalt Blue - warmer than Ultramarine Blue and cooler than Cerulean .

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*Yellow Ochre – A warm gold earth tone

*Burnt Sienna darker redder earth tones

White - I use a Titanium white because I love its covering power and opacity. Thinner and more transparent whites are also available, so you should experiment to decided which you prefer. Regardless of your choice, make sure you carry a large tube of it!

WATER SOLUABLE PAINTS

The colors are as rich and saturated as regular oils but have the advantage of drying quickly and using water for clean up. They feel like oils without the plastic quality of acrylic paint.

Do not run out and buy these paints and then immediately take them on a painting trip.. Give yourself plenty of time to get used to them before leaving for a workshop.

ACRYLICS

There is a new acrylic available called Golden Open Acrylics . They dry much more slowly than regular acrylic paint, and also have slow drying mediums to slow them even more. as well. They can also be re-activated with water, even when your paint looks dry on your palette. You will need a enclosed palette , such as a "Stay Wet" brand to keeps the colors wet.

PASTELS

The color theory taught at the school can be easily applied to pastel, which makes it an excellent medium for learning color. Degas used pastels to the fullest potential, exploiting its vitality and brilliance. It is most importance to have a big selection of colors. Many artists use Rembrandt pastels for the foundation of their painting, supplementing them with softer but more expensive brands for finishing notes. A large set of 300 Rembrandt pastels may seem like a huge investment, but it is actually the least expensive way to start. Pastels last for a long time so that you will get many paintings out of a large set. Don't skimp!

THE PALETTE

A palette may be the most important item when painting outdoors because it is the main vehicle of your color mixing. This is not the item to skimp on. Frustration caused by mixing color only reduces the enjoyment of learning to see it! Pochades and French easels come with good wooden palettes. Some easels come with a polished acrylic palette made for easy cleaning. Prepare a new wooden palette by rubbing grocery store quality "safflower oil" into it before using it. This gives you a slick surface preferable for mixing and keeps the paint from staining and drying too fast. You may prefer to mix color on a white palette which is usually made of plexi-glass. This type can be cleaned easily while working, and travels well, fitting inside your easel or sketch box.

I readily acknowledge the convenience of palette paper. You can buy plastic containers which have airtight lids that are made to carry them. The limitation to paper is that once the paper becomes filled with paint, it is impossible to continue using it. When you are trying to capture a light effect, it takes too much time to save colors & mixtures and transfer them to a fresh sheet.

Many art instructors won't let you bring paper palettes with you. I am not such a martinet, but there is a solution.

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Purchase a large paper palette pad to hold the squeezed colors and then place a smaller pad on it. When the smaller mixing palette is covered, simply tear off that page and you instantly have a fresh surface to work on.

BRUSHES

Please bring at least 5 brushes in varying sizes such as 2,4,6,8. I do not suggest any one style of brush because that is a personal choice. However, I do recommend bristle brushes, not the softer type such as sable.

PALETTE KNIVES

I do not teach palette knife painting per se. So if you are most comfortable with brushes, by all means use them. However, if you want to experience and learn to paint using a palette, read on! At first, using a palette knife feels similar to frosting a cake-unwieldy, stiff, and foreign. It is intended to keep painters from focusing on insignificant details and being too preoccupied with doing a 'finished' painting. You may not think so at first, but the knife really becomes enjoyable. It is easier to clean than a brush, you need fewer knives than brushes and you don't need to carry additional items such as brush cleaning mediums and containers. It really lightens the load when walking to painting sites. A palette knife should allow you to spread a lot of color while the point makes it easy to paint thin strokes and a bit of detail. I recommend a knife that is about 2 inches in length with a pointed tip. Everyone likes different sizes, and strength, so it might be best to bring 2-3. Even if you are planning to use brushes, please bring a palette knife as it has many other uses.

MEDIUMS

My choice for an overall medium for oils is a Gamblin Alkyd product made from Safflower oil. I like the fact that it comes in a squeezable tube. I used Liquin for many years and still like it. Unfortunately, no matter what size bottle, it eventually dried out. There are many other good mediums out there. Make sure it says that it increases the flow of oil colors, and helps dry quickly. Anything that says "Alkyd" can be used with oils paint. Make sure if you are using water based, or acrylics, you get the mediums made for those paints. I am a 'less-is-more' person and prefer not to do anything if I can buy it ready to use. However, if you like to do this, there are many great formulas and recipes presented in art books on technique. You should experiment and find the one you like the best, and perhaps, which odor you can best tolerate. You will also need at least 1 Quart Odorless Mineral Spirits and a container for Brush Cleaning. There is also a new 'green' mineral spirits at various hardware stores, that work very well and are odorless. Please just remember that Cleaning solvents like turpentine, turpenoid or mineral spirits are not painting mediums!!! Using them as mediums causes the paints to be applied too thinly lacking vitality. There are a number of products available that are made without resins. Using less toxic ingredients such as walnut oils makes painting much healthier. Make sure your brush cleaner can be carried easily from car to location. I do not recommend coffee cans because their lids will start to 'melt' from the fumes of the solvent. If you don't want to purchase an expensive portable brush washer, make sure that whatever screw type jar you use, has a firm cover.

DEALING WITH WET PAINTINGS

To speed up the drying time of oil paint, you can use an Alkyd white paint or Underpainting White paint instead of your regular oil white. Winsor-Newton offers a complete line of Griffin Alkyd colors which dry much faster than oil. They have all of the advantages of oil's flexibility, but dry rapidly. If you do not want to buy an entire set

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of Griffin paints, using only an alkyd white with the rest of your colors will speed the drying process. Also, for carrying wet paintings, even to your car, you can check out inexpensive and light weight panel carriers. I use Raymar.com , but if you Google, there are many on the market.

DRAWING MATERIALS

Although pastels are good for drawing your composition, carrying them can make them crumble. A better alternative is either Carbothello or Prismatic Pencils instead. Colors chosen for these sketches should light in value, but discernible on the white boards. I usually use light blue or green.

Very important: DO NOT USE CHARCOAL or LEAD PENCILS

PAINTING PANELS

Please have two prepared panels per day to accommodate most of the week's activities.. Keep the sizes at 9x12, 11x14 or if you work quickly, 12x16. Nothing larger please.

Panels are preferable over stretched canvas outdoors, because they eliminate the problem of sun reflecting through canvas and are less susceptible to punctures.

To save expense, there are many artists online who show you how to make your own canvas panels.

Fortunately, plein air painting has gotten so popular that a number of excellent professionally manufactured panels are now on the market.

You can also buy inexpensive cotton panels which have been very much improved from the really cheap ones in the past. However, only buy them if they say archival, acid free.

BE CAREFUL. Some prepared boards are very slick and shiny. If you have unfortunately bought them, put a layer or two of gesso on them. You will save yourself a lot of aggravation.

EASELS

I recommend purchasing a good portable easel, especially one that is light and easy to open. There are several styles available but cheap ones are never worth the trouble and time they take. A French easel (also called an outdoor easel) is a complete painting environment made specifically for portability. It consists of a paint box with adjustable legs that stores paint and a wet palette, with a holder for safely carrying two wet paintings. However, when loaded they can be a little heavy and awkward to manage. For this reason I prefer a half-box French Easel instead of a full box. The smaller version holds almost as much, but is significantly lighter and easier to handle. If you purchase a new French easel, become familiar it. Open and close it a few times and become acquainted with how everything works. I recently encouraged a student to try an "Anderson Easel" found at Jerrysartarama.com. It was light weight, sturdy and had similar qualities to a wooden french easel. At Jerry's, I have also found a 'half box' french easel, which weights much less than a full box which makes it easier to set up. Whatever you buy, keep the box until you have made sure everything works at home and all screws, etc are in tact..

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Practice packing your easel to make sure everything fits in. I can pack all of my paints and palette knife into my half box easel. There are lots of new gimmicks to make carrying mediums and other stuff light & compact. I use film canisters to carry medium such as linseed oil, driers and still have room to stuff in sheets of paper towels off the roll.

Some artists like to attach knapsack shoulder straps to their easels so they can keep their hands free while walking. You can attach a small canvas bag to the side which can hold additional tools, such as a brush-washing jar, sketch pad, etc.

Another option is the Soltek easel, which you can check out and purchase at its website at www.Soltekarts.com. It is compact enough to be carried on a plane. I really like its convenience, but I find it to be a little heavy once it is filled with paints. But if you “weigh” the facts, its advantages are that it is portable, extremely simple to set up and very, very sturdy. (Sorry for the pun!).

POCHADES AND TRIPODS

Last but not least are Pochades. These are small boxes designed to be contained painting stations. There are so many on the market, and being advertised by artists making their own versions, again check out all of the specs. And especially the weight.

Pochades attach to a tripod, hold 1-2 panels for easy travel, and usually have a place for paint. come in different sizes, which range from 5x8 to about 11x14. However, the size of your painting is limited to the size of the pochade.

These days all tripods headsets come with detachable quick release heads that snaps securely to the bottom of the pochade. This makes it easy to set up a pochade quickly.

An alternative to a pochade box is a PALETTE/PANEL holder from The Open Box M. Their website is www.openboxM.com. Open Box M makes a magnificent beautiful pochade, but you can order the palette and panel holder separately. It is very compact, lightweight, and it folds to protect the paint. I like its efficiency, but you will need an additional item to carry wet panels and the rest of your supplies. Their website offers a variety of items including carrying cases.

Other alternatives in the pochade line-up are made by Guerilla Painter, EasyLite, and The Art Attack Painting system. You can find them at www.pochade.com and www.artworkessentials.com, and www.artworkessentials.com.

The last word is that there is not one set up that is good for everyone. All artists swear by their favorite equipment. What is most important is that you find a set-up that accommodates your needs and strength.

I do not get any remuneration by recommending any of these products, but please mention my name when

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ordering from the private manufacturers.

Last but not least, a sketch pad and pencils for notes and drawing.

SOME VERY IMPORTANT SUGGESTIONS

Keep your supplies to a minimum and lightweight. Find a back pack or rolling luggage that is big enough to carry everything that you'll need for the day but not too big to carry comfortably when it's loaded.

Try to pare everything down to what I have recommended. Try not to bring too much extra.

Think portable. We will always try to stay near a painting site, but if there is a short walk, you will not be happy if you are dragging or carrying a u-haul behind you. Practice using and walking with your art gear before attending a workshop.

Get used to everything you are carrying and how things work, especially easels. Don't waste time at a workshop to start learning how to use all of this 'stuff.'

To save weight, I save half used tubes of paint from my studio for outdoor painting.

Compartmented pill containers are wonderful for carrying squeezed out paint! They seal shut, come in many different sizes and keep well in the freezer between sessions. Use 2 or 3 sections for white. Keep the large tubes at home in your studio, your car, or motel and refill every day.

Paper Towels Trust me, old rags and torn sheets are not absorbent enough.

Mirror - A hand mirror is useful for giving you a new point of view of your painting.

Umbrella with clamp — for shade. Clamps on to your easel or chair. Avoid brightly colored umbrellas. Although small, Walmart carries the “chairbrella” in the camping goods section. Inexpensive, light weight and easy to clamp onto an easel. Bring a few extra hardware store clamps.

Hat with a very good brim and possibly a shade for your neck.

Sunscreen

Insect repellent can prevent a lot of annoyance!

Small clamps

Bungee Cords- 2-3 different sizes for anchoring palettes, and other uses.

Painting Clothes - When deciding what to wear, avoid bright colored shirts, jackets and sweaters. They reflect into your wet painting, (especially on sunny days) and can make accurate color mixing difficult. Gray or neutral colors minimize this problem. And once again, don't forget a hat or sun-visor!

Stool or chair — Standing can be taxing and lunch much better if comfortable! There are many lightweight walking stools in all art catalogs

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AIRLINE RESTRICTIONS

Air travel prohibits the taking of turpentine onto a plane. Don't attempt it. It isn't worth having all of your paints confiscated.

Some paint mediums look suspicious and the security people might not let it through. There are a couple of solutions. The first is to tape a label over the ingredients and write something like Painting Medium on it. The other is to get an empty bottle of a familiar substance like Robitussin, fill the bottle with drier and include it with your shampoo and toothpaste. Metal objects such as pliers also make security people nervous, so you may want to put items like these in your check-in luggage rather than carry them through security in your paint box.

Last but not least, please bring some images of your paintings with you on your tablets or cell phones. I love seeing your work and it also helps me understand your experience.

I really appreciate that you are joining me at my workshop at the wonderful Creative Arts Center in Chatham. I look forward to meeting you in Sept.

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