

PLEIN AIR ONLY

Painting Directly From Nature

This month, our special report is on the primary editorial focus of the magazine: plein air painting. We offer descriptions of varied approaches to outdoor painting to suggest how artists can individualize their selection of materials and techniques. This survey includes paintings that have recently been selected as semi-final winners in the bimonthly *PleinAir* Salon competition (www.pleinairsalon.com).

Marc Dalessio: Two Ideas With Historic Precedents

One of the most significant aspects of Marc Dalessio's (www.marcdallessio.com) procedures outdoors is using the sight-size method for drawing and laying in the big shapes of a landscape composition. The method, historically important in portraiture, involves making decisions about scale, placement, and detail from a measured distance away from the painting surface. That is, Dalessio marks a spot about 10 feet away from his easel and stands there to evaluate how to make the next mark on his canvas.

The intended result is that the painting and the subject will appear to be exactly the same size from the marked location. The process involves walking back and forth from the canvas to the marked position each time the artist needs to draw a line or block in a painted shape. "I'm not a slave to sight-size," Dalessio says, "but I depend on the procedure at the beginning of the painting process when I am establishing the scale, perspective, and essential relationships between the major shapes within the landscape."

Another technique the artist learned while studying with Charles Cecil is to scrape down the oil paint applied the previous day when he goes back to the same location to continue developing a plein air painting. "I start by establishing the big shapes," he explains, "using large brushes and a lot of paint. When I go back to the same site the next day I scrape off the paint to create a stained indication of the subject. That yields effects one can't get by just applying thick paint each day. It softens edges and keeps the shadows thin and transparent. It's a powerful way to develop portraits, and I find the likeness gets stronger after I scrape off

the impasto layers of oil color, because the process reveals an average of all the shapes the painter found during the session."

Dalessio used this scraping technique recently while painting a 35 x 43-inch portrait of his wife sitting under an olive tree and reading a book. The American artist, who lives with his wife in Croatia, has won several *PleinAir* Salon awards.

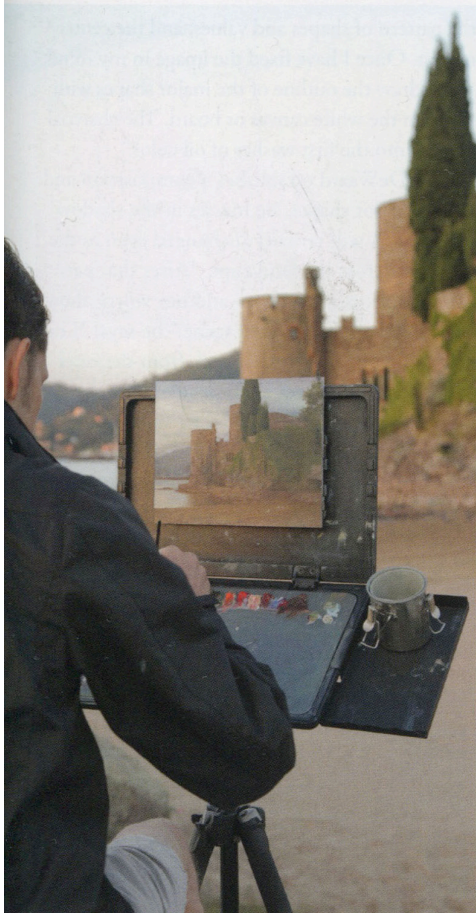


Tina Under an Olive Tree

By Marc Dalessio
2013, oil, 43 x 35 in.
Collection the artist
Plein air

**Marc Dalessio paints his wife posing
under an olive tree**





Joshua LaRock painting the Château de la Napoule

Thomas Kegler & Joshua LaRock: Following Classical Approaches

These two New York artists teach at the Grand Central Academy and were recently invited to enjoy a residency at the Château de la Napoule in France, where they employed different approaches to outdoor painting. LaRock says, “I used paints diluted with turpentine and a small amount of retouch varnish to hasten the drying time so I could block in the drawing and light effect of the landscape. If the conditions were similar on subsequent days, I went back to the same locations and painted with thicker oil colors to extend the value range. I find that working on a dry underpainting allows me to obtain more detail and a greater variety of textures than when I work *alla prima*.”



Thomas Kegler's easel and vertical palette

In contrast, Kegler completed 20 small field studies during his residency in France and planned to refine them in his studio and then use them as studies for larger and more complex paintings. “I had to adjust the way I normally work on location because I only had five days to paint in France,” he says. “When I’m not under that kind of time pressure, I might return to the same location over two or three days as Josh did, but I thought my best approach on my first trip to France would be to bring a large group of paintings to partial completion and then use my memory of the scene and environment to finish them.”

Kegler also points out that for the past year he has been using panels he makes by adhering

linen canvas to sheets of Dibond aluminum so the finished paintings are not vulnerable to changes in humidity and temperature. “I prefer to carry the Dibond panels out into the field because they won’t get bent, dented, or broken when I’m transporting them in my backpack or luggage, but the weight of 20 small panels is much greater than foamcore-backed panels,” Kegler says. “I wanted to keep the weight of my luggage as low as possible, so in France I also worked on some RayMar double-primed linen panels backed with foamcore.”

For more information, visit www.joshualarock.com and www.thomaskegler.com.