

Why I Paint with Bugs and Rain

by **Dee Beard Dean**

In order to observe and study all the subtleties of nature, it is truly necessary to paint on location. In the open air, one can see and feel the energizing mood and color of a landscape as the light and atmosphere swiftly changes. What most attracts me to a certain scene is difficult to say. Sometimes it is color harmony, sometimes the patterns and elements. Often the special light or texture is what captivates me.

Many times I don't have a definite plan when painting on location; rather, I allow my intuition and emotion to guide me. I try to paint quickly and spontaneously, always thinking of an evocative way to depict the scene. Somehow this process seems to bring a certain life and freshness to the painting that I might not have obtained had I planned too meticulously.

There is usually a connection between the scene and one's emotions at the time: The senses are elevated and the memories of the landscape—the sounds, the smells, the atmospheric conditions of that day—linger long after leaving the location.

I try to convey and translate what is before me as honestly as I can, remembering that my painting is my artistic interpretation of how I feel about that place at that particular moment. There is always a story to tell about each artwork which, when viewed later, brings back the memories of painting there. This is something that doesn't happen when painting from photographs.

It is exciting to observe the varied landscapes in the many different places where I travel to teach and paint. But it is also exciting to paint right here in



my own state of North Carolina, with its mountains and its coastal towns. I love the camaraderie of painting with others on location; this is what prompted me to organize PAP-SE with five other plein air artists. This organization, founded in 2002, has evolved into a well-recognized juried group of talented plein air painters.

My main interest is to feel excited about what I am painting, knowing that if I am excited and focused on the subject before me, my enthusiasm will hopefully translate to the viewer. Even if I fail to produce a great painting, I will have at least learned something from the experience. The joy of painting on location, even with the occasional bugs, wind, heat, cold and rain, continues to lure me back into the open air.