

Painting Eye-catching Scenes

by Dawn E. Whitelaw

Plein air painting is a lot like looking through a kaleidoscope. All the images you see through the scope are pretty, and then suddenly something catches your eye. Often, you don't know exactly why you are attracted to a particular point of interest. This "Clearance Sale" scene was like that. I certainly did not set out that day to find a clearance sale to paint. There was just something very appealing to me. It might have been the color, or the light. I'm not sure.

After I set up my easel, painting against the light, I noticed that my friend and fellow PAP-SE artist, Paula Frizbe, was set up opposite me, painting into the light. It seems that I am more drawn to the shadows and their closely related colors, while Paula is drawn to the light side of objects.

One of the most appealing aspects of plein air painting is that I learn so much when I paint from life. I will tackle subjects and lighting situations en plein air that I would not try in the studio. I am much more fearless. I know that if I don't get a good painting, at least I will have learned something I was trying to learn more about such as the effects of dappled light. I have painted out with Loryn Brazier many times and I am always in awe of her ability to paint dappled light. Though my process is basi-



cally the same whether painting portraits and landscapes, in my studio or outside, the pace is different on location. When painting outside, the pace is much quicker, while the studio process is slower and more thoughtful.