



## Plein Air Painting: Utah's Plein Air Painters

- Making Art Outside
- Creating In Natural Light and Environments

### LESSON OVERVIEW/OBJECTIVES

Students will learn about Plein Air (French for “open air” or “outside”) painting and some Plein Air Utah artists such as Doug Braithwaite, John Hughes, Susan Gallacher, Kate Starling, Roland Lee, Suzette Gertsch and more. Understanding that there are many ways to draw and paint outside, students will review landscape painting basics and head outside to create their own Plein Air landscape in its natural setting with natural light.

### KEY IDEAS THAT CONNECT TO VISUAL ARTS CORE CURRICULUM:

Based on Utah State Visual Arts Core Curriculum Requirements (3rd Grade)

**Strand: CREATE (3.V.CR.) Students will generate artistic work by conceptualizing, organizing, and completing their artistic ideas. They will refine original work through persistence, reflection, and evaluation.**

**Standard 3.V.CR.1:** Elaborate on an imaginative idea and apply knowledge of available resources, tools, and technologies to investigate personal ideas through the art-making process.

**Standard 3.V.CR.2:** Create a personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials.

**Standard 3.V.CR.3:** Demonstrate an understanding of the safe and proficient use of materials, tools and equipment for a variety of artistic processes.

**Standard 3.V.CR.5:** Elaborate visual information by adding details in an artwork to enhance meaning.

**Strand: RESPOND (3.V.R.) Students will understand, evaluate, and articulate how works of art convey meaning for the observer as well as the creator.**

**Standard 3.V.R.1:** Contemplate about the processes an artist uses to create a work of art, and determine messages communicated by an image.

**Standard 3.V.R.2:** Analyze use of media to create subject matter, characteristics of form and mood.

**Standard 3.V.R.3:** Evaluate an artwork based on given criteria.

**Strand: CONNECT (3.V.CO.) Students will relate artistic skills, ideas and work with personal meaning and external context.**

**Standard 3.V.CO.2:** Recognize that responses to art change, depending on knowledge of the time and place in which it was made.

## INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:

Students will:

- Learn about Plein Air painting.
- Learn about drawing and painting images in their natural settings outside.
- Learn about a variety of Utah Plein Air painters and their diverse styles.
- Learn how to use and blend paints and/or oil pastels.
- Create a Plein Air drawing/painting outside using a style they learned about or developing their own method.
- Use basics of landscape drawing to create proportion, depth, texture and composition in their Plein Air art.

## SUPPLIES

- Large cardboard pieces or clipboards for outside use to hold art paper for student use.
- Sketchpaper and high quality art paper.
- Paints and brushes.
- Pastels, crayons, pencils and erasers.
- Palettes for color mixing.
- Water cups.

## VOCABULARY

**En Plein Air or Plein Air Painting** - French phrase meaning “open (in full) air”. Its used to describe the act of painting outdoors where a painter reproduces the actual visual conditions seen at the time of the painting.

**Stylized Art** - Art represented in a way that simplifies details rather than trying to show naturalness or reality.

**Expressive Brushstrokes** - The painting brush is a simple, yet powerful device. Just as the spoken word that carries a certain energy, both physical and emotional, so does the brushstroke carry the energy and the meaning, too. By placing the brushstrokes next to each other, the artist creates a “sentence”. And as any sentence, whose purpose is to communicate a thought or an emotion, the brushstroke sentences communicate a certain feeling.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

### Lesson Introduction - About Plein Air Painting

It is believed that painters have painted in nature since the beginning of painting itself. Though there is no exact documentation, artists have portrayed the landscape for hundreds of years. Some landscape drawings were turned into paintings, and many believe the artists could not have represented the scenes so accurately without having done some painting on location. The first documented outdoor painters are Italian artist Agostino Tassi (1578-1644), who taught artist Claude Lorraine (1600-1682), who is known to many as the father of outdoor painting. His paintings directly from nature survive.

It was in the next century that the landscape itself became an accepted subject for artists, led by Pierre-Henri de Valenciennes (1750-1819) in France and John Constable (1776-1837) in England. Both artists were passionate about encouraging their students to go outside to draw and paint. Valenciennes, who was an instructor at the École des Beaux-Arts, the leading art school in Paris, urged his students to get experience painting directly from nature. These two artists, their students, and others went outside, working quickly against the changing light and rapidly moving clouds.

When possible, an entire oil “study” was completed outside; on other occasions, there was only enough time for chalk or graphite drawings to be done for an oil painting that would be completed later in the studio. They worked on paper, wood panels, and canvas. A study, often called an etude, is a rapid painting done on location to capture the essence of a scene, its the colors and mood. Painters often took these studies into the studio as a reference to make larger, more detailed studio paintings.

Painters realized that they could more accurately represent the colors and the light by painting in nature. Though painting outdoors took considerably more effort, the results were worth the trouble, as they found paintings done on location came alive.

## INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN CONTINUED

### History of Plein Air Painting continued

Over time revolutionaries such as Impressionists Monet, Renoir and others started a movement that came about largely by painting outdoors. Though the practice of plein air painting has never stopped, it seemed to die down for several decades and then began a resurgence, mostly in California, in the 1980s. Today the movement is unstoppable; it has become “the new golf” as tens of thousands have taken up plein air painting across the world.

<http://paintoutside.com/wp/the-history-of-plein-air-painting/>

### Lesson Plan

1. Show students samples of Plein Air Paintings both from history and from modern day Utah Plein Air artists. Discuss how they captured the setting outside and look at details of light, value, composition etc. Also examine painting styles and how each person can create a look or feel for his/her artwork. Review landscape basics of horizon line, background and foreground.
2. Teacher and students will determine where they will do their plein air paintings. A place can be chosen close to school or in their neighborhood keeping in mind that plein air paintings do not have to be landscapes. They are works of art done as seen outdoors in natural light.
3. Students set up their outdoor workspaces by sitting down, placing the cardboard or clipboard on their knees and laying the paper on top of that.
4. Once a location is determined students should do several sketches to determine the most interesting composition. A view finder can be very helpful in choosing the best composition. Have students look closely at all the details that make up their composition like a tree, shrub, walkway etc.
5. If time and/or weather are limiting factors, photographs can be taken of the location to capture the effects of natural light. The photographs can help students complete the work of art in the classroom if daily outings are not possible.
6. Reminding students not to worry about drawing perfectly. Its their impressions of what they see and they are making their own work of art. Students may choose to lightly sketch in things like a tree trunk with branches so that they can fill in details with paints, pastels, colored pencils etc. later.
7. Have fun with this, the sky is the limit on what can be created!
8. When paintings are completed have students display their works and discuss the following talking points (Teachers please feel free to modify to fit the age group you are working with):
  - The source of their subject matter and the steps they took to develop their painting.
  - The various painting techniques used and why they were chosen.
  - The basic art elements used.
  - The focal point in the work and how this helps understand the importance of composition in a painting.
  - The pros and cons of plein air painting.

### Additional Resources:

- <http://muddycolors.blogspot.com/2011/05/power-of-brushstroke.html>
- <http://www.pleinairpaintersofutah.com>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/En\\_plein\\_air](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/En_plein_air)
- <http://www.kinderart.com/drawing/pleinair.shtml>
- <https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=what+is+plein+air+painting&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#q=plein+air+painting+definition>
- [https://store.schoolspecialty.com/OA\\_HTML/xxssi\\_ibelIdeasResourcesPage.jsp?docName=G3742303&minisite=10206](https://store.schoolspecialty.com/OA_HTML/xxssi_ibelIdeasResourcesPage.jsp?docName=G3742303&minisite=10206)

## VISUALS - Utah Plein Air Painters



Roland Lee "Cliffs Above Zion"



Roland Lee "Zion Runoff"



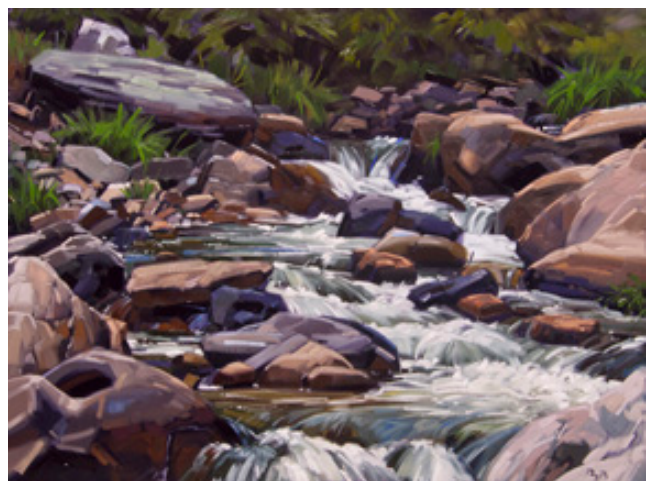
Kate Starling #1



Kate Starling #2



Doug Braithwaite - "Desert Glow"



Doug Braithwaite - "Emergence"

## VISUALS - Utah Plein Air Painters Continued



John Hughes - "Devils Castle"



John Hughes - "Rocks and Pines2"



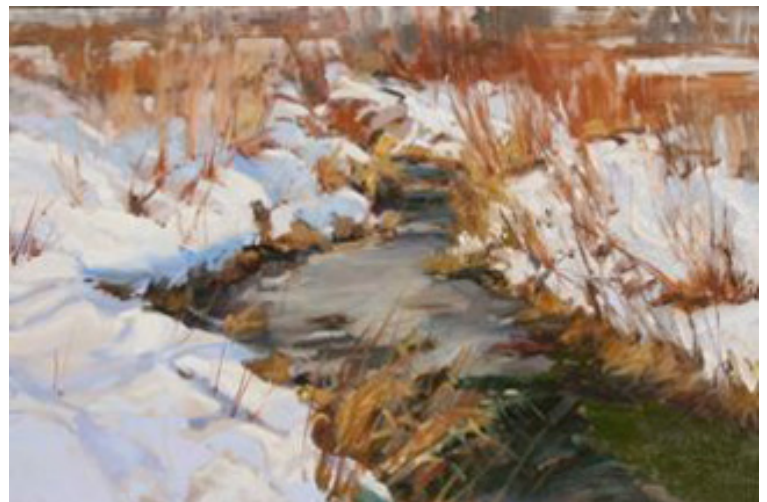
Susan Gallacher - "Rocky Road"



Susan Gallacher - "Spring Creek"



Susette Gertsch - "Untitled"



Susette Gertsch - "Untitled"

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