

Lasting Lessons from Nature

By Sue Stewart

Due to an illness, I've been almost totally confined to painting in the studio for the past three years. I'm a big advocate of painting from life and I love painting outside, so being restricted to studio painting, has made me feel pretty grumpy. However, the experience made me realize how the years of painting on location have served me well.

The principles I've learned for painting outside, I discovered, work equally well inside. A still life set-up became my landscape. Concerns with atmospheric perspective, shadow and light massing, shape simplification, cool and warm temperature, value emphasis, lightest light-darkest dark contrasts, and spontaneity all apply to a small world as well as a large one. While I may miss the sights, sounds and feel of painting on location, the "muscle memory" I've gained from on-site observation is invaluable in the studio.

