

Love Notes from Tuscany

by Karen Hewitt Hagan

It seems that writing has always been a partner to my painting. From the beginning of my art career, I would write in a journal while I sketched. Then I began writing notes on the back of the paintings. Sometimes it's a few notes after I have finished painting and sometimes I write more after returning to the studio. Unedited and spontaneous, I want my words to record or relive the joy I felt while outdoors. Journaling helps me remember the feelings of the scene and savor the smells, sounds and colors. And mostly, I want to express my gratitude for having the chance to observe nature and make a little painting. Self-expression through words and brushstrokes, to me, seem to go hand-in-hand with my inspiration.

This painting was done in Italy where another artist and I were giving a workshop on a working olive farm in Tuscany. It was my day off – all to myself – to paint anywhere I wanted.

I hiked down the hill from the farmhouse where I was staying, about a half a mile, and looked up to this incredible view. Silvery-green olive trees on one part of the hill and the bright yellow-green of the summer grapevines on the other. Great contrast of colors against the blue sky, and all with 75 degree weather—it was a painter's dream! There I was, alone on a dirt road taking in a perfect landscape, with its focal point, Casa Fatoria, flanked by the elegant, ever-present cypress trees.

I worked quickly on this small painting, trying to capture the shadow on the house as it moved swiftly in the sun and all the



differences in the greens in the foreground, pushing and pulling the colors until I was happy with the effect. In the end, I was pleased with the feeling of the painting. I kept this painting because the image and the words on the back of the panel have inspired me to do larger works on the same subject. This little painting continues to remind me why I love working in the field.