

***Natural Light* Exhibition Curatorial Statement**

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The landscape of Ohio is vast; there are rolling hills, wide fields and open skies. To the casual traveler, it may seem empty ... but to a painter, it is teeming with possibility. Oftentimes, if one is working from direct observation and with full attention, the most difficult problem is that the scene is so full. Learning to trim to the essence is a large part of learning to paint *en plein air*.

Not having viewed the landscape in which each one of these artists stood, brush in hand, on a particular day, in a certain light, I cannot be sure of what decisions were made. Like the viewer, I could only judge the work based on the medium as it was applied to the canvas or paper before my eyes. Part of the challenge was the similarity of subject matter and scale in most of these works; as you may notice, there is a lot of green in this room. Further resemblance lies in the fact that many of these artists travel and paint together. Indeed, you will find repeated locations here as well. Additionally, there were rarely conceptual matters to consider. This genre is generally not about social, political or emotional concerns.

Some overriding interests and common concerns led to my choices. Compositional strength was always a factor, though I do have an inexplicable penchant for artwork that is transitional – pieces that, because they are part of the process of an artist moving from one body of work to another, have some measure of awkwardness. The presence of a consistent voice was also of interest – whether that was expressed in the handling of paint, the depiction of light or the choice of palette. Some of the works were chosen for the way in which they successfully communicated a sense of place or implied a narrative. There was another interest that surfaced for me – when an artist chose to return repeatedly to a certain place, expressed in slight variations of shape and color, the desire to compare these “sets” was irresistible.

In the end, however, what truly interested me was whether the painting at hand articulated most clearly a focus on atmosphere or object. This did not lead to exclusively choosing a group of works that fell into one camp or the other. It simply led to a new way of looking, a consideration of what the artist was seeing and choosing to set upon the canvas, to show the viewer.

Deciding what is important along the path of one’s life may be the most longstanding human endeavor. This struggle is also one of the powerful undercurrents in painting from life. The more closely one looks, the greater possibility for utter confusion. And so, it was with great respect and interest that I considered the 40 members of the Ohio Plein Air Society who expressed desire in being a part of this exhibition.