

Summer means taking watercolors on location

This is another lesson on art and drawing by special columnist David Messing. He has taught for ten years and operates an art store, Art Store and More, 16338 Middlebelt, Livonia, 522-6311, 265 N. Main Street, Plymouth, 455-1222. Messing encourages questions and comments from readers. You may write him at his store or c/o Observer Newspapers, 23352 Farmington Road, Farmington, MI 48024.

By David Messing
special writer

Hey folks, it's summer. I imagine if I were a construction worker, I would sit atop a lumbering bulldozer smoothing out a stretch of road.

As I adjust my hard hat stoically, I would glance at lines of cars trying to pass me. Never wearing a shirt, I would quickly become as brown as a bear. (Did you ever notice how brown fat looks so much better than white fat?)

If I was a roofer, I would wonder if I

artifacts

was being punished for the sins of a former life as I muck tar around in the sweltering summer heat on top of some strange building.

If I was a fisherman, I would be on the water with the first rays of daybreak. Rising and sinking, with the swells of the water, I would ponder deep questions, like "what am I doing out here so early?" or "who left the worm, that is now welded to the bottom of my tackle box?"

If I was an office worker, I would sit and gaze out tinted windows wishing I could trade jobs with anybody doing just about anything in the out of doors. Then hypocritically, I would opt to stay indoors for lunch because of the air-conditioned comfort.

BUT I AM an artist and I have to get out there and draw, sketch and paint. After an hour or two of sitting on the wet grass, I will return home with a world class headache, a wet seat and a sinus headache that would stop a rhino.

So Mr. Nature Lover, "Dave," will take a synthetic Advil for his back and an unnatural Sinutab for his headache

and beam with joy for the opportunity to have suffered in the great out of doors to produce a work of art.

So let's talk a little about art on location or on vacation. Probably my favorite medium for outdoor color work would be watercolor. There is nothing like the perfect light of the sun to appreciate the richness and flow of watercolors.

Here is what I recommend you take with you for "on location" painting. Umm... let's see, I guess water would be one of the first considerations. Just fill an empty plastic milk container and take it along... What you don't use, you will probably drink.

So that's the "water" part, now the "color" part is a little more difficult. Customers always ask me to help them pick out a good assortment of colors for their beginning watercolor palette.

IN TURN, I always ask them, "what

do you think you will be painting?" Every palette I feel, must have the trusty red, yellow, blue, black and a few greens or browns.

But if you only do animal paintings you should carry more browns and tans than purples and greens. Then again, if flowers and woods suite your artistic fancy you should carry more purples, reds, oranges and greens.

If you are just starting watercolor, I recommend you go the econo route: Niji (brand name) makes two beautiful sets of half tubes of watercolors. A set of 12 colors is \$3.50 and a set of 24 is only \$6. Why that is about what you would spend on lunch (including the tip).

I paint with Grumbacher's "Academy" line of watercolor. The "finest" line is much more expensive and personally I don't see any difference. "What about a palette?" Many ask, "can I just use a plate?"

"Sure," I say "you can even use the back of your hand if you want." But really folks for about one or two dollars you can buy a nice little palette made out of white plastic. By the way, stay away from the metal ones they

make it difficult to see the true color of your mix.

FOR \$6.50 you can buy the best. This palette is the little brother to the very excellent "Robert Wood" palette that cost about \$18. So if you don't mind the missing autograph of "Robert Wood," you can save about \$7.50.

This palette has a cover to protect your paint and best of all on the cover is a large indentation which not only is a handy place to hold your brushes and palette, but when you set up, it also is a nifty place to pour your water for mixing.

Another, and better, container for water is a little plastic box by Raphael. It cost \$3.50 and all it does is hold water. But it has a division which separates the water to keep one side clean or cleaner. It also has a serrated top to hold your brushes in place so they don't roll around or have them damaged by leaving them stand in the water.

Let's see now that's the water, the color, the container and now the brushes and the paper. Just take three brushes, an oval mop brush for large

areas, a medium round brush #8, #9 or #10 and a small round #4, #5 or #6. My favorite is the Beaux Arts Line by Grumbacher and they cost about \$5.50 to \$7.

BY ALL MEANS use a watercolor block when on location. A block is a pad of watercolor paper which is sealed on all four sides so that the paper is pre-stretched and cannot wrinkle. When your first sheet is done (or "done for") simply peel it off to reveal a perfectly smooth sheet unaffected by the previous painting. Blocks are so popular now that they come in a variety of qualities and surfaces of paper. Most are 140-pound cold press ranging in price from \$6.50 to \$35. But, start with Morrill (brand name). It's about the cheapest and many love it so much that they never try any other. My favorite is Strathmore #400.

Don't forget a square or two of paper towel for catching drips or quickly lifting wrong or too dark of a color. An H to 4H is my pencil choice and either a white or kneaded eraser for corrections and oh, yes... Don't forget the Advil and the Sinutabs.

Dossin Museum marks its 25th anniversary

The Dossin Great Lakes Museum, on Strand Drive, Belle Isle, will celebrate its silver anniversary Wednesday, July 24, with special festivities.

The museum will have extended hours that day, from 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Regular hours are 10 a.m. to 5:45 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. Phone 267-4440.

Festivities will include model ship builders, rope and knot splicing demonstrations and a special birthday cake for all. Every 25th visitor will receive

a commemorative gift from the museum gift shop.

Some 3,000 square feet of the Dossin Museum has been transformed into an interpretive exhibit, "Michigan's Nautilus Time Capsules," continuing to Dec. 14, 1986. Visitors will see the condition of sailing and steam vessels that were lost in Michigan waters between the 1850s and 1970s.

The exhibit presents a different view of shipping history, a chance to see a vessel prior to its loss and its present condition on the state's bottomlands.

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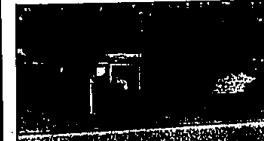
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