

Workshop Outline: “The Architecture of Light” Thomas W. Schaller

Scope:

A final painting is begun by the artist long before his or her brush ever touches the paper. As artists, we observe the world around us and are constantly – often subconsciously - forming paintings in our minds. And as artists, I believe it is our job to learn how to see; how to identify what it is that will result in the best possible paintings; paintings that tell the stories we wish to tell.

As an artist, it is “light” that is the constant narrative in my work. So when I am deciding on what it is I wish to paint, I concentrate less on specific objects – places or things – and more on the strength of a strong abstract value composition of darks and lights.

In my workshops, painting indoors or out, I demonstrate the fundamentals - and crucial importance - of identifying strong compositional subjects for the artist. No amount of technical expertise or finesse evident in a final painting can compensate for a composition lacking in strength and clarity of a strong idea and solid value organization. We will try to learn how to see the beautiful and infinite compositions all around us in the most grand and most humble of scenes.

Additionally, a theme of my workshops is the dialogue between the architecture of man and the architecture of nature. We will explore the endlessly compelling compositional possibilities of this topic.

Outline:

Daily – indoors or out - I will complete demos for the class to demonstrate the topics to be covered

1. By site observation, or by using photographic samples and examples from my own sketch book, I will quickly demonstrate the importance of identifying valid compositional subject matter. And then, by executing quick, impressionistic initial abstract value sketches, I will demonstrate how these are used as the basis for the completion of a strong and satisfying watercolor.

We will cover the basics of 1. Idea / Story 2. Value Composition 3. Color Theory – Also basics of perspective composition and fundamentals of drawing as the root of a successful final painting

2. Participants will be urged to complete simple black and white pencil sketches of proposed subjects from site or from photographs and to discuss how abstract compositions of the three basic values – black/white/ grey – can be arranged to form the basis of a final painting.

3. Using these completed compositional/value sketches as “roadmaps”, we will quickly sketch our compositions on watercolor paper

4. Along with me, participants will be guided through the simple steps of using these completed value sketches to set up and quickly complete successful final watercolor sketches.
5. Daily, after an initial demo, we will explore exercises that highlight the depiction of skies, water, architecture, landscapes and atmospheric conditions. Each day, exercises will become more comprehensive. On the final day, participants will be asked to develop their own compositions that incorporate all the elements covered in previous days.
6. On the afternoon of the final day, we will have an informal “exhibit” of the work done by participants and I will lead an informal critique and question/ answer session about what we have learned in the previous days.