

Next in Line

Meet six young artists shaping the future of plein air. Find out what inspires them, the breakthroughs that have taken their work to the next level, and how you can add their paintings to your collection today.

BY KELLY KANE



MARTIN
GEIGER

Why I paint outside: Painting outdoors requires managing a number of moving parts. Sure, it's about seeing light, form, and space — but it's also about dealing with the unexpected. Sudden weather changes, cars parked in the wrong spot, or the thrill of finding a fresh perspective on a familiar place — learning to adapt to those surprises has been indispensable to my process.



What catches my eye: I certainly look for clear light and interesting compositions, but honestly, the world is so full of paintable subjects that I've learned to trust my intuition.

Aha moment: Recently I discovered the power of scale. Large shapes and broad, simple brushstrokes make precise or detailed passages more striking — like how warm and cool tones enhance each other. Opposites make the work come alive.

What I want viewers to feel: At first, I hope they feel a sense of monumental space, geometry, and distilled light — strange yet inviting. Then, as they look longer, I want smaller, specific moments to emerge and pull them deeper into the world I've built.

Plan B career: Something hands-on, like carpentry or metalwork. I'd still be making things.

What's next: Honestly, my "next big thing" is usually just the painting on my easel right now.

Price range of work: From about \$300 for a 10 x 10-inch to around \$8,000 for a 7 x 6-foot piece

Representation: Steven Francis Fine Art, in Lynchburg, VA

Website: martingeigerart.com

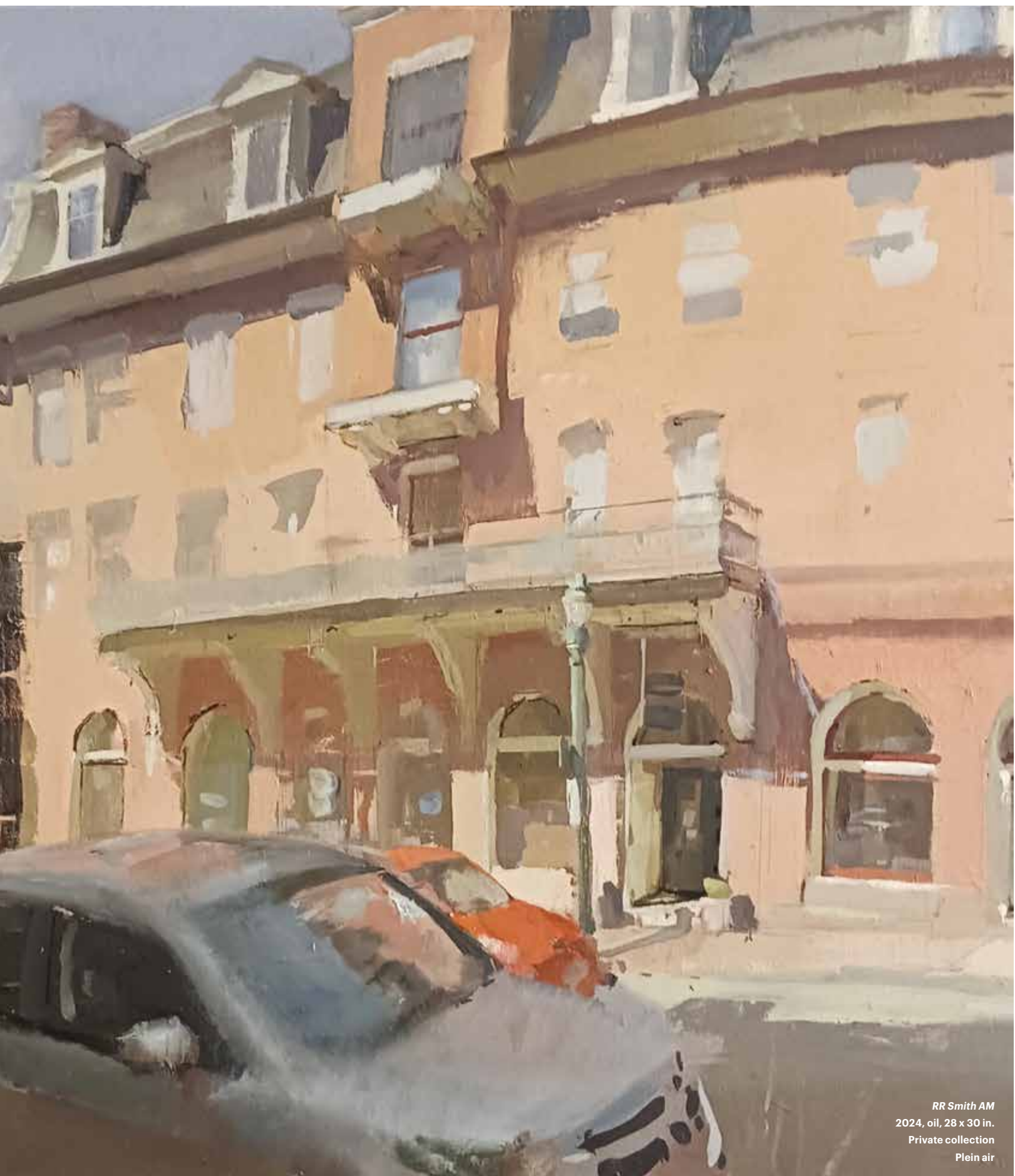
Instagram: @martingeigerart

Beverly Street Weekend

2023, oil, 30 x 40 in.

Available from Steven Francis Fine Art,
Lynchburg, VA
Plein air





RR Smith AM
2024, oil, 28 x 30 in.
Private collection
Plein air



JONATHAN MC HUGH

Why I paint outside: I feel most alive and present in nature or when painting, so combining the two feels meditative and recharging.

What catches my eye: I look for arrangements of light and shadow that move the eye dynamically. Smaller subjects, like tide pools, often interest me more than traditional, sweeping landscapes.

Aha moment: Everything changed when I realized I could tear up my plein air paintings and reassemble them into something new and unique. That took the pressure off “failed” watercolors, which became raw ingredients for larger collaged studio works.

Epic plein air fail: Once, while I took a short walk away from my setup, a seagull raided my bag and dumped my wet brushes, palette, and kneaded eraser into the sand. I keep a much closer eye on my gear now.

Biggest influence: My dad, Joe McHugh, who painted plein air with my brothers and me from the time we were kids. I’ve always admired his watercolor style.

What I want viewers to feel: I’d like them to feel the echo of my full sensory experience in a specific place and time — something beyond photorealistic accuracy.

Advice I wish I’d had earlier: Take bigger artistic risks! Plein air isn’t about imitating the masters — the choices that make your work unique are what matter most.

Plan B career: Mechanical engineer or musician

What’s next: I just finished my MFA in painting at Laguna College of Art and Design, and I am excited to start teaching at Saddleback College this fall.

Price range: \$300–\$700 for plein air works; \$500–\$8,000 for studio works, depending on size and complexity

Website: jonathanmchughart.com

Instagram: @mchughscapes



(TOP) *Tide Pool 1*

2025, watercolor, 20 x 22 in.

Available from artist

Plein air



(ABOVE) *Overcast Snowy Range*

2024, watercolor and colored pencil, 8 x 10 in.

Available from artist

Plein air



(RIGHT) *Rising Tide 1*

2025, watercolor, ink, and colored pencil on collaged watercolor paper, 48 x 24 in.

Private collection

Plein air and studio



South of Pelican Point
2025, watercolor, 7 x 7 in.
Available from artist
Plein air



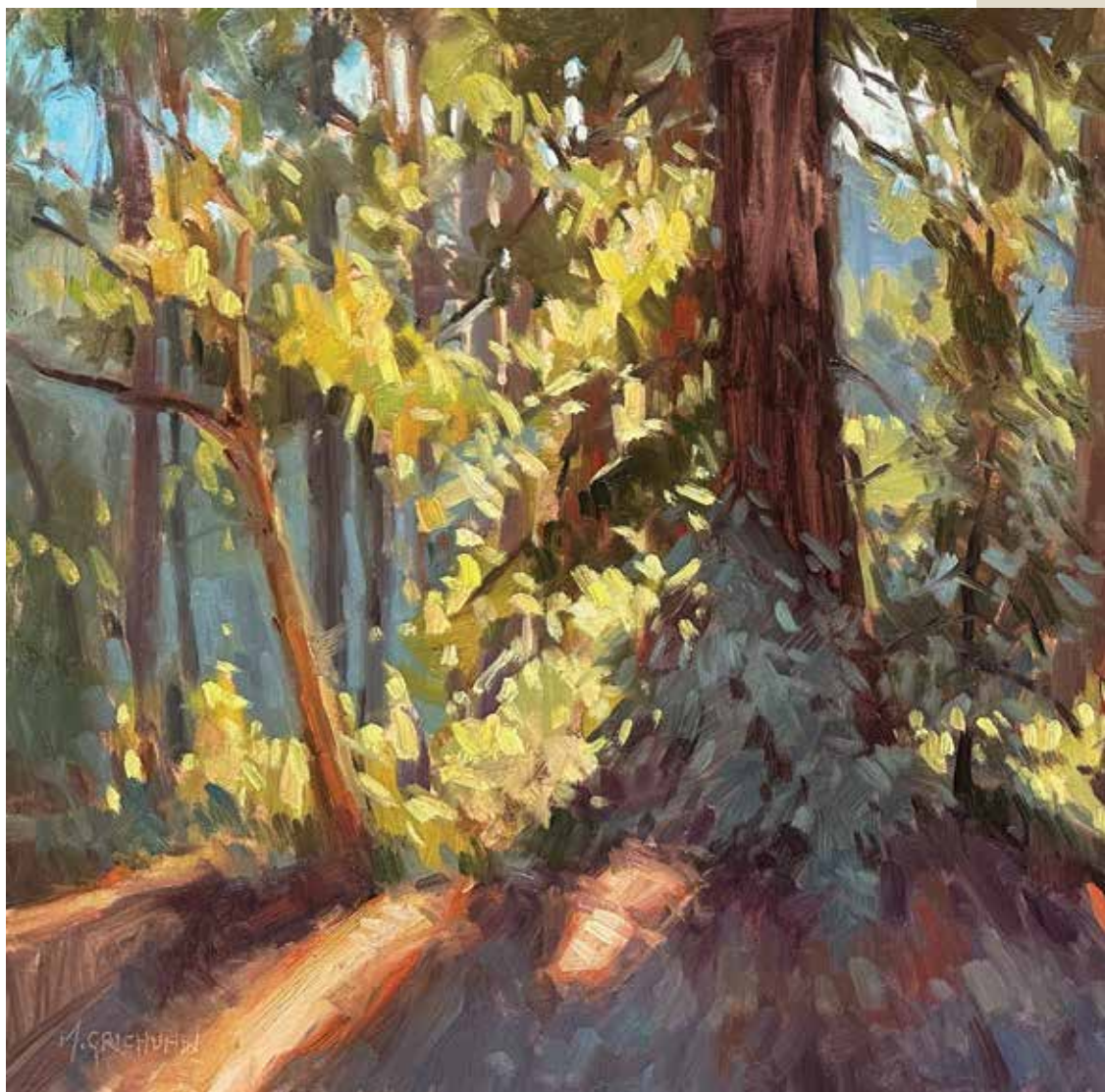
MEISHA
GRICHUHIN

Why I paint outside: It's immediate — I only have a couple of hours before the light changes. That urgency forces me to focus but also to just go for it and get the paint down on the panel, which is meditative in its own way. All of my senses are activated, so the sounds, smells, breeze, temperature, and conversations with passersby all get bound up in the painting.

What catches my eye: I have to feel excited about the subject — it doesn't need to be some breathtaking scene, just compelling. It could be the atmosphere, light, or composition that draws me in. Sometimes I need to adjust the design to highlight the element that attracted me in the first place, but as long as I can showcase it, I'm a happy camper.

Aha moment: Outdoors, there's no time to overthink. You have to dive in and be bold. Of course, you need to have a sense of where you're trying to go, but you can always re-evaluate and change course. I still think of something John Burton told me: "I may not be right, but I am certain."

Epic plein air fail: I've dropped more than one fresh painting in the sand — including one time when I wasn't even at the beach! During a recent



paint-out, I picked a spot to set up at a park, next to a children's playground. As I tried to carefully slide the finished piece into my carrier, it caught on one of the corners and nose-dived into the sand. I scraped off as many granules as I could with a palette knife and repainted the area that took the biggest hit. Instant texture!

Biggest influence: Paul Kratter, one of my first plein air instructors, taught me the importance of good composition and accurate values. He also encouraged me to take my work seriously, but to have fun in the process.

What I want viewers to feel: I hope they sense what it felt like to be there — the sunlight filtering through the trees, the subtle colors of the coast on a gray day, the smell of the forest, the cool sea breeze. I want to give them a little piece of that outdoor experience indoors.



By the Volleyball Court
2023, oil, 11 x 14 in.
Private collection
Plein air



Bursting Through
2024, oil, 12 x 24 in.
Available from artist
Plein air

Asilomar Dunes
2024, oil, 16 x 20 in.
Private collection
Plein air

Advice I wish I'd had earlier: I'm sure there are always going to be things I wish I knew sooner, but some lessons only click with time and experience. At this point, I'm still trying to find my way in the art world. My main concern is getting as good as I possibly can without losing the joy of painting — I think you can tell in an artist's work when that happens.

Plan B career: Honestly, I've never found anything I love as much as painting. For sure, there are more stable careers out there, but I'm all in. Maybe in another life I could have been an interior designer — I love creating beautiful, comfortable spaces.

What's next: I've got work in a couple of California Art Club exhibitions this year, and I keep my website updated with shows and events.

Price range: \$275–\$3,600

Website: meishagrichuhin.com

Instagram: @meishagrichuhin





MO MYRA

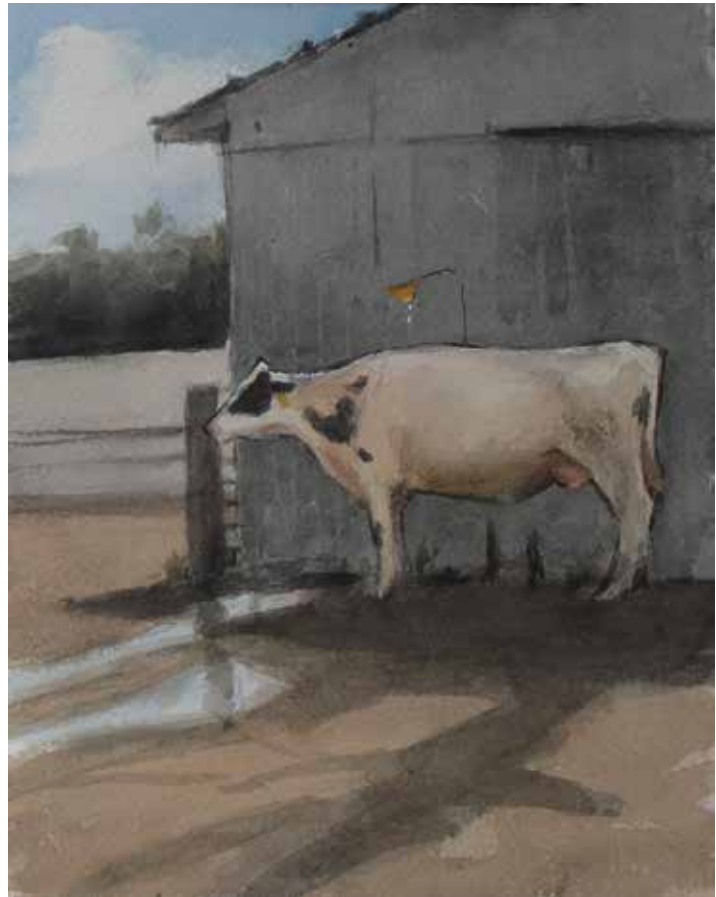
Why I paint outside: Growing up, I loved both painting and the outdoors, so plein air was a natural fit. It's busy — bug bites, shifting light, constant focus — which forces me to be present in the moment. That immediacy is the best way I know to truly experience a place.

What catches my eye: I often explore a new area by running through it first so I can see what grabs my attention. More than anything, I'm drawn in by the "feel" of a spot; some places just have a story to tell — and I can't resist sharing it.

Aha moment: I used to think speed was everything. My breakthrough came when I realized it's okay to slow down, to really understand what's in front of me and how I feel about it. If I run out of time, that's fine — I can always return to the same spot on another day.

Epic plein air fail: Once, while scouting subjects in Maine with my dog, I got so excited at the sight of cows just hanging out by the side of the road I immediately pulled over and started painting. I spent a couple of hours drawing and laying in a few washes — completely in the zone — when I looked up to see all the cows had vanished! I packed up and returned to my car, where I discovered I'd left my windows open and it had filled with flies. I kept finding their carcasses for weeks!

Biggest influences: I admire Wyeth and Sargent, but two contemporary artists really shaped me: Tyler Berry and Mario Robinson. I'm still reminded of lessons I learned in their workshops when I'm out painting today.



Keeping Cool, 2025, watercolor, 8 x 6 in., private collection, plein air

What I want viewers to feel: The same thing I feel when I'm outdoors painting — peace.

Advice I wish I'd had earlier: Take workshops with artists you admire and never stop learning. Always aim to get better.

Plan B career: I often daydream about being a farmer. I know I have an idealized vision of what that actually means, but I love hard work that makes you feel exhausted, but satisfied, at the end of the day.

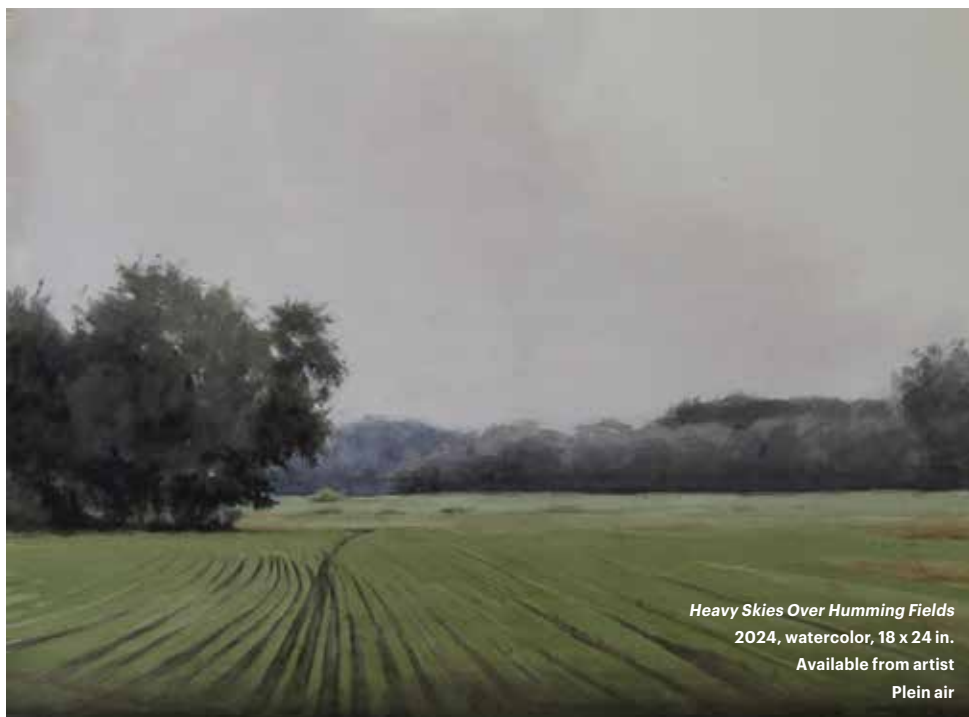
What's next: I stay busy spring through fall painting weddings, but this winter I'm looking forward to turning my plein air sketches into larger studio works. I already have a few ideas in mind for paintings of cows, one of my favorite subjects, that I'm especially excited about.

Price range: From \$420 for a 5 x 7-inch plein air painting, increasing with size

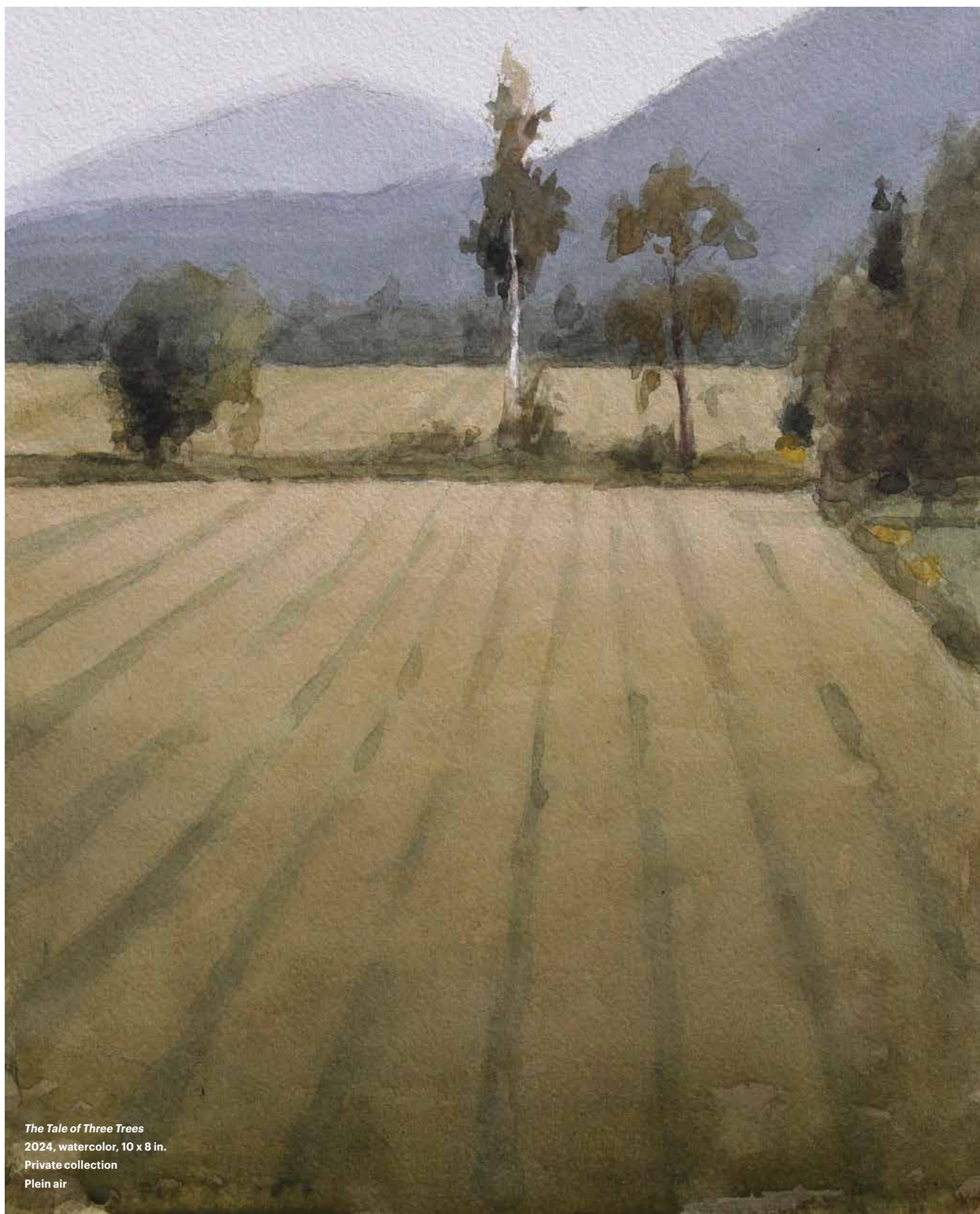
Representation: Susan Powell Fine Art, Madison, CT; Abend Gallery, Denver, CO

Website: momyra.com

Instagram: [@mo.myra.art](https://www.instagram.com/mo.myra.art)



Heavy Skies Over Humming Fields
2024, watercolor, 18 x 24 in.
Available from artist
Plein air



The Tale of Three Trees
2024, watercolor, 10 x 8 in.
Private collection
Plein air



Alamo Canyon, Valles Caldera National Preserve
2025, gouache, 11 x 14 in.
Available from artist
Plein air



ALINA LINDQUIST

Why I paint outside: Time in nature is healing; it quiets the mind and rejuvenates the soul. If we stay present, the land always has something to teach us.

What catches my eye: I'm interested in how a painting can tell a story about a place — often through textures, like the bark of a Joshua tree.



Sometimes I take a mindful stroll just to scout ideas for future paintings. Typically, those ideas build over multiple visits.

Aha moment: On the last day of a week-long gouache workshop with Phyllis Shafer, everything finally “clicked.” I’d been frustrated by the fussy medium, but by learning how to maximize both its opaque and transparent qualities, I got the best of both worlds.

Epic plein air fail: During an artist residency at Great Basin National Park, I tripped while unloading a day’s worth of work and planted my hand right in the middle of a fresh oil painting. Luckily, I could repair it — but my palm was literally covered in the scene!

Biggest influences: Historically, Maynard Dixon and Georgia O’Keeffe. More recently, Phyllis Shafer taught me the fundamentals of plein air — from a comfortable, efficient setup, to color, value, and composition.

What I want viewers to feel: A connection to the land. I hope to spark curiosity about the places I paint and encourage people to explore and

I’m Still Standing, Wee Thump
2024, gouache, 11 x 14 in.
Private collection
Plein air



Serene Summits
2024, oil, 36 x 48 in.
Available from artist
Studio from plein air study



enjoy public lands. In our busy world, it's important to pause, breathe, and appreciate nature.

Advice I wish I'd had earlier: Just keep painting. In the beginning, most plein air works will feel like failures — but each one teaches you something. Embrace the bad paintings; the ability to learn from your mistakes makes them just as valuable as the good ones.

Plan B career: Being a backup dancer for Lady Gaga would be fun! But seriously, one of my undergraduate degrees was in anthropology, and I could easily see myself pursuing research in ethnobotany, a sub-discipline within that field.

What's next: This fall I started an MFA program, where I'll be addressing conservation efforts related to the public lands I portray in my paintings. I also plan to develop larger

studio pieces based on the work I created during my summer residency at Valles Caldera National Preserve.

Price range of work: \$300-\$5,000

Website: alinalindquist.com

Instagram: [@alina.lindquist](https://www.instagram.com/alina.lindquist)



MARK BARAL

Why I paint outside: I've loved the outdoors since childhood. My parents even gave me a special spot in the backyard where I could dig, sparking a lifelong fascination with the ground, trees, and nature. Even now, I enjoy what Clyde Aspevig calls "land snorkeling" — noticing small details along the ground while also looking at the clouds and sunlit treetops above. Plein air painting became the perfect way to unite my love for nature and art.

What catches my eye: I'm drawn to contrasts — busy details set against broad, quiet spaces, such as a dense, textured tree against a smooth, gradient sky; a manmade fountain against a mass of greenery; or soft, white clouds above a glowing horizon line. Those surprising juxtapositions are what inspire me most.



Aha moment: My biggest breakthrough was learning not to see "things," but interlocking shapes of color, value, and edge. On January 10, 2018, while painting a creek bed filled with rocks and dried leaves, it finally clicked. I built the scene from abstract shapes and textures, and when I stepped back, it all came together. I've been chasing that feeling ever since.

Epic plein air fail: Once, while painting on a small beef ranch in north-west Florida, I was repeatedly stopped by suspicious workers — one of whom randomly told us he had played with Michael Jordan on the Chicago Bulls. I had permission from the owner to be there, but apparently the message never reached them — or her husband. He came by himself to check us out, explaining that people often trespassed on the property to collect psychedelic mushrooms, so at first he thought painting was just a cover. He relaxed once he saw my work. But as we packed up that evening, a bull nearly charged us — we barely made it to the car. The entire experience was disorienting.

Biggest influence: I would have to give that position to Adam Clague, an excellent representational painter in Liberty, Missouri. I took three years of private art lessons with him in high school, much of it outdoors.

Most of my plein air fundamentals trace back to his teaching.

What I want viewers to feel: Each day has a unique feeling — shaped by the light, color, air quality, or clouds. I want my paintings to communicate a strong mood that conveys the "feeling of the day" so viewers can sense what I experienced in the moment.

Advice I wish I'd had earlier: Fortunately, I was given all the advice I've ever needed to be successful early on. But for the sake of answering the question, here's one recent piece worth sharing: "Go be a human first before you're an artist. Your art should flow out of your humanity, not the other way around."

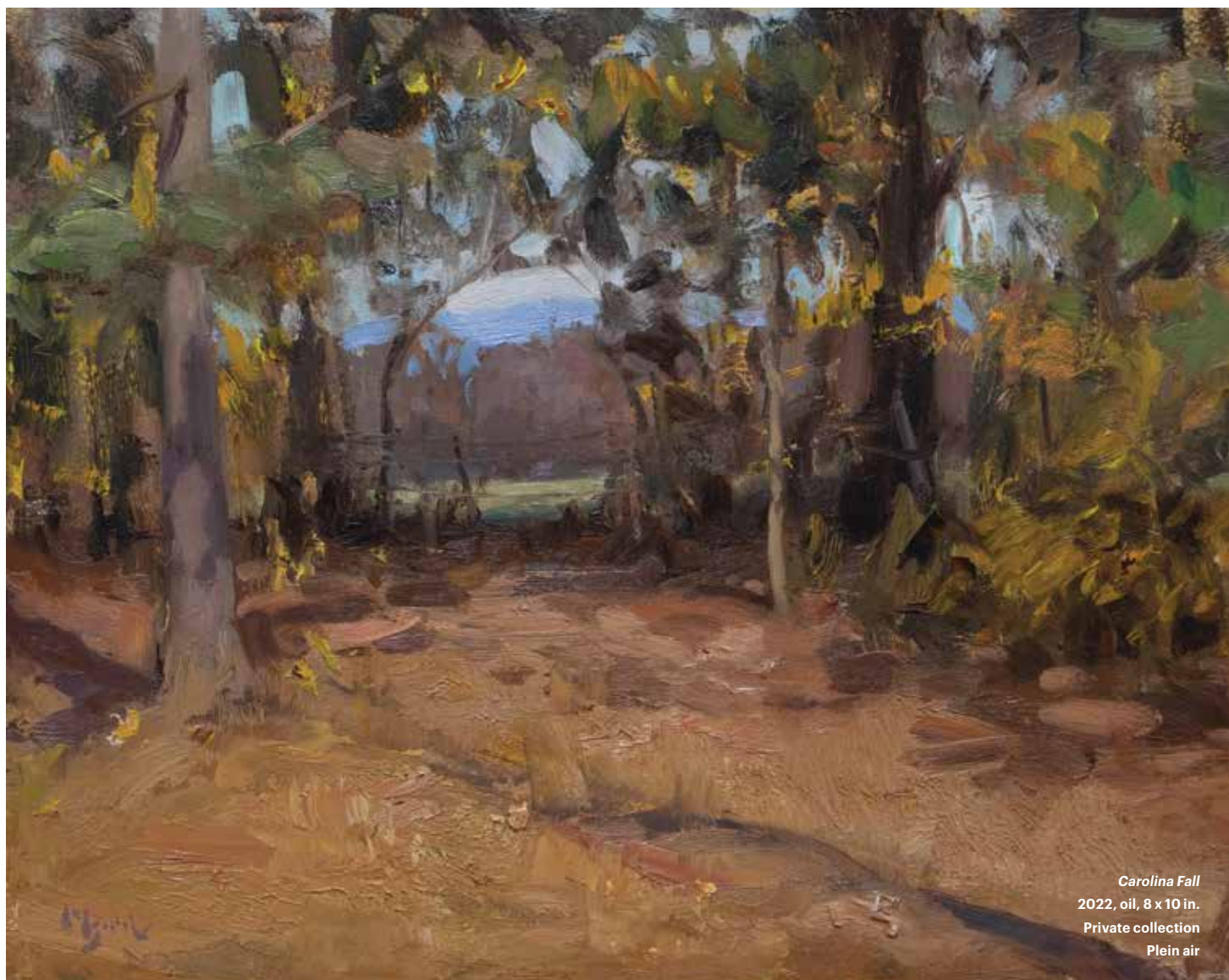
Plan B career: I loved custodial work in college — the simple act of sweeping or emptying a trash can is deeply satisfying.

What's next: I recently painted near Mount Whitney in the Eastern Sierras, making plein air sketches on scraps of linen and taking lots of reference photos. I plan to develop a show from those studies.

Price range: From \$200 for 6 x 8-inch studies to \$2,000 for larger works

Website: markbaral.com

Fountain in the Square
2024, oil, 10 x 8 in.
Private collection
Plein air



Carolina Fall
2022, oil, 8 x 10 in.
Private collection
Plein air



The Wind and Her Work
2024, oil, 9 x 12 in.
Private collection
Plein air



(TOP) *Sun Through Clouds*, Jonathan McHugh, 2025, watercolor, 8 x 10 in., available from artist, plein air

(ABOVE) Jonathan McHugh



(RIGHT) *Cloudy Summer Afternoon*, Jonathan McHugh, 2024, watercolor and colored pencil, 8 3/4 x 13 7/8 in., available from artist, plein air



(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) *Emily's Porch*, Martin Geiger, 2025, oil, 28 x 40 in., available from Steven Francis Fine Art, Lynchburg, VA , plein air ● Martin Geiger ● *Vertigo*, Martin Geiger, 2024, oil, 20 x 20 in., private collection, plein air ● *RR Smith Rear Stairwell*, Martin Geiger , 2024, oil, 16 x 20 in., available from Steven Francis Fine Art, Lynchburg, VA , plein air ● *Late February Garage*, Martin Geiger, 2025, oil 24 x 30 in., available from Steven Francis Fine Art, Lynchburg, VA , plein air



(CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT)

Autumn on the Coast

Mo Myra

2024, watercolor, 6 x 8 in.

Available from artist

Plein air

Mo Myra

The Summer Spot

Mo Myra

2025, watercolor, 8 x 10 in.

Available from artist

Plein air

Sunrise Over Saranac

Mo Myra

2024, watercolor, 6 x 8 in.

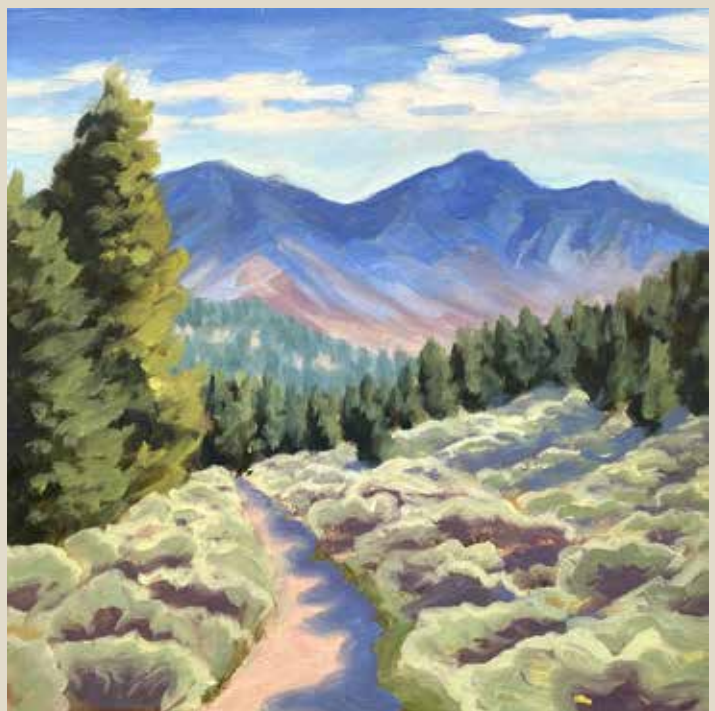
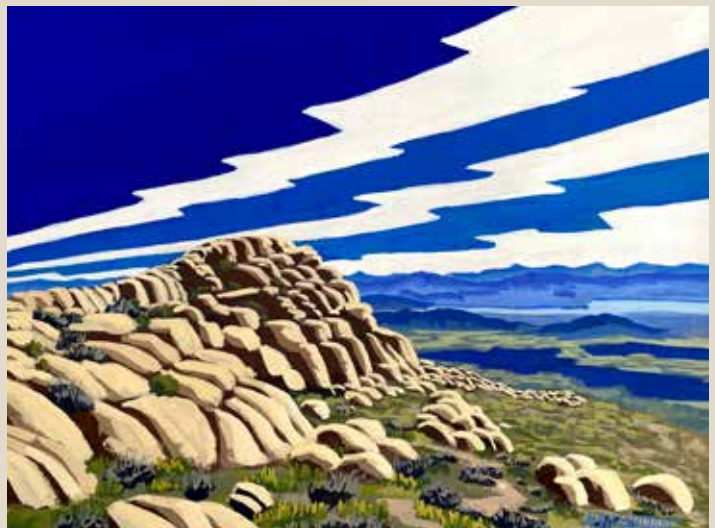
Private collection

Plein air

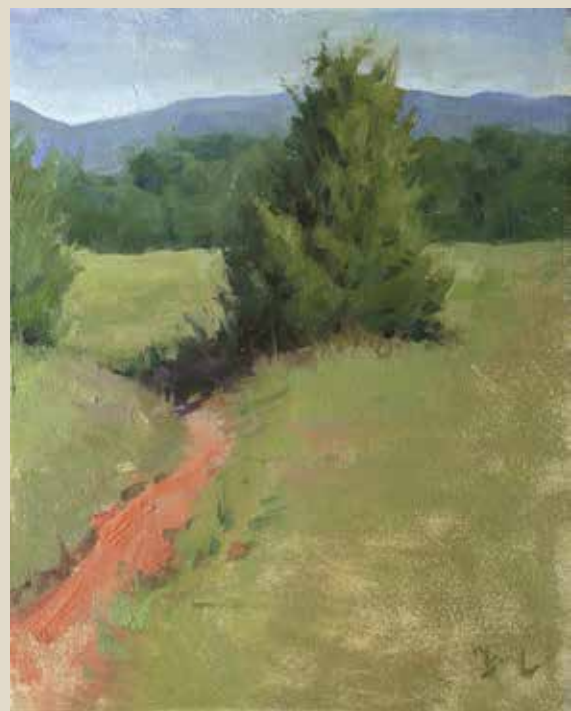


(CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT) *Cascading Path*, Meisha Grichuhin, 2024, oil, 20 x 16 in., private collection, plein air ● Meisha Grichuhin ● *A Little Further*, Meisha Grichuhin, 2025, oil, 18 x 24 in., private collection, plein air ● *Garrapata Spring*, Meisha Grichuhin, 2025, oil, 16 x 20 in., available from artist, plein air





(CLOCKWISE) *Hope Valley*, Alina Lindquist, 2024, gouache, 11 x 14 in., private collection, plein air ● *Late September Afternoon in Avi Kwa Ame National Monument*, Alina Lindquist, 2024, gouache, 11 x 14 in., plein air and studio , private collection ● *One of My Favorite Places — Avi Kwa Ame National Monument*, Alina Lindquist , 2025, gouache, 11 x 14 in., plein air and studio , available from artist ● *Timber Creek, Great Basin National Park* , Alina Lindquist, 2024, oil, 10 x 10 in., available from artist , plein air ● Alina Lindquist



(CLOCKWISE)
New York Morning
 Mark Baral
 2021, oil, 8 x 10 in.
 Private collection
 Plein air

Summer Sun
 Mark Baral
 2020, oil, 10 x 8 in.
 Private collection
 Plein air

Mark Baral

Cliffs at Point Lobos
 Mark Baral
 2024, oil, 8 x 10 in.
 Private collection
 Plein air and studio