



August 17, 2007

### **Should You Attend Workshops?**

Have you occasionally thought of attending painting workshops but decided against it because the idea of it has you feeling anxious? Now think about it; these people attending the workshops may have felt the same way when they first started, right? I certainly did but then reminded myself that I was there to better my skills and not waste time worrying about what the other person did or did not know. No matter what you do in life there is always someone better at something but who cares? You want to better yourself at what interests you and that is why you are attending a workshop.

There are numerous art books available to improve our skills and that is great but they do not show everything. For myself, I like to see it done by the instructors. Hands on demonstrations give us the opportunity to watch the instructors little tricks and techniques. Do keep one thing in mind when attending workshops; do not go there expecting to go home with finished works or you will be very disappointed. In all the years of attending workshops I have not gone home with a finished work but I did gather lots information, ideas and yes I did forget a lot but certain demos or lessons did come back to me later while I was painting at home. Taking notes is fine if you are sitting down while the instructor is talking to the class. Note taking during a demonstration is not a good idea or you will miss out on the important details such as how she held the brush or how much water did she have in her brush? Did he / she add water to palette first and then add paint and so on? Sure there will be some students that do complete works but again remember they may have attended numerous workshops and have learned well. Just as you will learn; by listening carefully and most of all watching the instructor's method of applying his or her techniques. They all have a particular way of mixing colours, or holding their brush or even a simple thing like wiping their brush on tissue before reaching for paint. All of these little things are an important part of the learning process. Notes are fine if you can read your writing but I stopped taking notes during demonstrations years ago and that is when I noticed the magical part of painting by each instructor. Little subtle movements even the instructor does not realize he / she is doing as those moves are natural to them. You can also learn from the other students who have been attending workshops for years as they too have learned new and different ways of accomplishing certain techniques; most students have no problems sharing their knowledge. Workshops are about sharing ideas, helping each other, making friends, having an open mind and most of all having fun, not about going home with finished works.



There are many wonderful instructors out there who hold workshops regularly and each of them have their own unique way of instructing and applying the techniques. I have attended numerous workshops with people such as the late Sheila Langlois, Brigitte Schreyer, Laura Landers, Gordon MacKenzie, Berdina Beaven, Shirley Howard, Joan Zageris, just to name a few. I have learned something from all of them and as I mentioned, each instructor has their own way of getting things done. I admire the works of each of these instructors and hope to be half as good as they are someday but do keep in mind what you are learning at the workshops, even though you love their work and want to paint like them you have to develop your own style of painting. At workshops, you are given instructions on how to accomplish this or that but you must also remember to find your own individualities as artists. Folks who purchase my work say that I have a style. I did not see it at first but now I do and you will develop a style too; just be patient, it will happen.

Cobalt Artist Colony is another wonderful learning experience. Five days of instructions by guest artists. The Cobalt Artist Colony is held the third week in July and an instructor is invited from either down south or locally to teach those attending the colony. This year, Elizabeth Holmes of Sudbury Ontario was the instructor and she had numerous instructions on how to create works of art, lots of information on art history, and various mediums for all of us to try out. There were beginning artists, intermediate and artists that have been attending the colony for the last 49 years. Next year will be the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Cobalt Artist Colony and plans are already in the works to make it an extra special year. Maybe we will see you there. It is a great way to visit with old friends and make new ones. Thank you Elizabeth, it was a wonderful learning experience.

Jsano School of Arts in Kirkland Lake, another place to check out for workshops. Again this year for month of August I am holding my evening workshop on Colour Mixing & Techniques in Watercolour for beginners and intermediates. Each year Jsano has various daytime and evening workshops for two weeks in August for both adults and children. They have Dance workshops, Singing, Musical Instruments, Tai Chi, various Art Workshops, Cooking, Sewing and much more. I have attended many workshops at Jsano over the years and today it is I who is the instructor. Should you attend workshops, **yes indeed!**

Keep those brushes wet and let the paints fly.

Alice Y. Seguin Sawicki signing off