



## ART ON THE GO

July 7, 2021

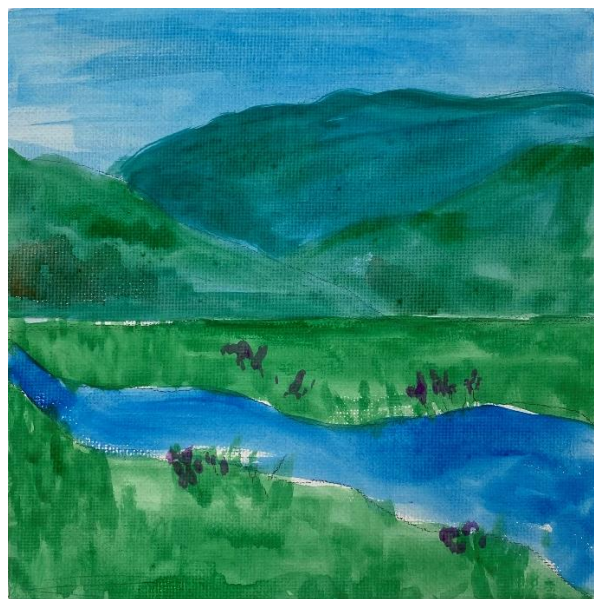
### Painting “en Plein Air”

*Explore the Great Outdoors to Paint a Landscape*

Painting “en Plein Air” translates to painting outside in the “open air.” Early American artists used this painting method to capture more than just what our eyes see. Spend time outside in nature! Explore the great outdoors and enjoy the fresh air as you create your painting.

There are many benefits to painting outdoors. There is natural light from the sun that allows the artist to paint things just as the eye sees them. Bugs can also land on your canvas! Unexpected things like this can make your painting adventure more fun.

It’s important to dress comfortably too. Dress for the outdoors by wearing outdoor appropriate clothing so that you can walk, run, climb and enjoy spending time in nature.



Being outside makes it easier to capture highlights, shadows, objects and people in the scene. Artists also sometimes make their painted landscape more dramatic by enhancing the colors in areas such as the sky, clouds, rocks and water. That means they don't exactly copy the scene they see in front of them! When you are working on this project, use your artistic voice and select colors to make your scene vibrant and exciting.

Artist Julie Hart Beers often brought her children with her when she traveled to paint, and they would play outside while she worked. Years ago, it was harder for women to make a living as an artist because girls were not

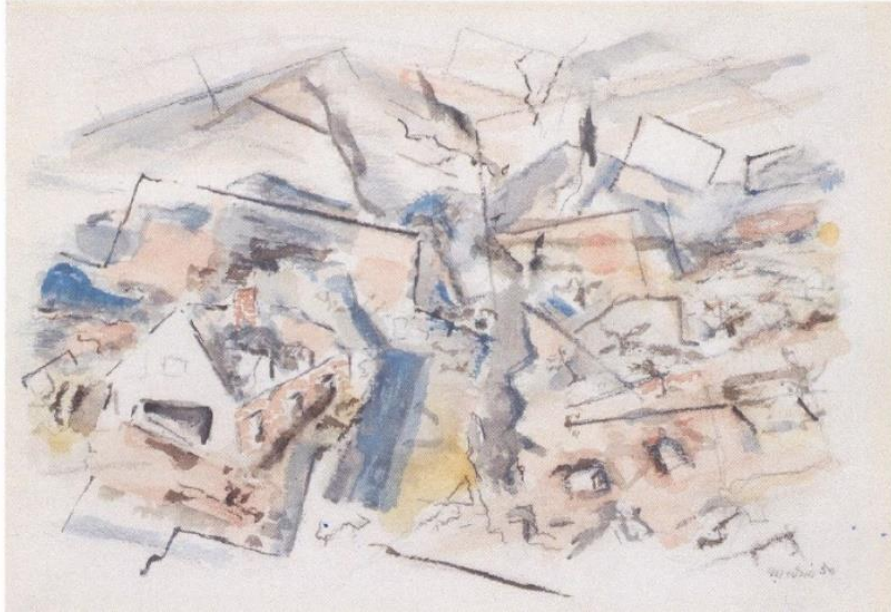
allowed to go to the same schools as boys. It was also hard to have someone else look after your children if you were not very wealthy.

She is celebrated as a woman artist with technical *proficiency* (skills) in capturing the details of a scene. Notice the details in the fallen fence posts and growing plants in the front of the painting. The pond and forest are less detailed because they are farther away.

**What do you see in this painting that tells you it is a quiet pond?**



Julie Hart Beers, *A Quiet Pond*, 1873, Oil on canvas, 13¾ × 11 in.  
Clara S. Peck Fund. 2020.4.2.



Artist John Marin is another artist who is known for his landscape paintings. His landscapes are more abstract. This style of art is more about the shapes and colors and feelings it expresses. It doesn't exactly *mimic* (copy) what is seen in nature.

John Marin, *Ramapo Mountains*, 1950, watercolor and pencil on paper, 9¾ × 14 in. Museum Purchase with Funds Donated by James B. Flaws and Marcia D. Weber. 2018.4.

His style is more fluid and open. **Does it feel like there is movement in this scene?**

He used watercolor paints. You can see how *translucent* (see through) the layers of color are.

**Can you see the brushstrokes?**

To achieve perspective, artists use a tool called a “**viewfinder**”, which helps them see objects in a more realistic way. Sometimes your eyes can fool you, and the viewfinder is helpful in seeing what is really there – it focuses the eyes.

These two paintings of landscapes show us that you can paint in whatever style you like. Your artwork can be realistic or abstract.



**Now try your hand at painting “en Plein Air” by exploring the great outdoors where you live.**

Materials:

- Viewfinder (included in gallery bag of materials)
- Wooden easel
- Canvas board
- Watercolor set
- 2 paintbrushes
- Pencil

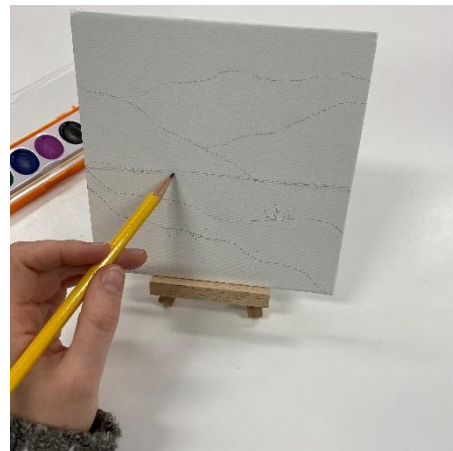
Materials not included:

- Cup for water
- Paper towels



1. Take a walk outside and explore. Walk outside your home, in your backyard, at a park nearby or other outdoor area.
2. Find a view that is special to you. It can be a rock formation, a hill, trees, a stream, a lake, a waterfall or anything that you are drawn to. Set up your painting station in this area.

3. First, take out your easel and make it stand on three legs so that it is level. Then, place your canvas board on your easel. Fill your cup halfway with water and take out your paints, paintbrushes, paper towels and viewfinder.



4. Sketch your scene. Using your pencil, lightly draw the scene you will paint. Look through your viewfinder to focus on the details of objects in your scene. Notice the scale and perspective. Notice how big or small certain things are compared to others. Notice the angles of the lines.
5. Add a horizon line. Draw a line across your canvas to separate the earth from the sky. You can draw your horizon line towards the top, towards the bottom or in the middle. It's up to you to decide how you want to lay out your landscape.

6. Paint your scene. Use your watercolor paints with paintbrushes to add color to your landscape. There are two paintbrushes with different tips for different effects. One is pointy and one is flat.
7. Clean your paintbrush in water between colors so they do not mix in their containers. Feel free to mix and blend them on the canvas. If your paintbrush has too much water, blot it dry on the paper towels.
8. Think creatively and experiment with different colors. Remember, it doesn't have to be exactly accurate. Express how the place makes you feel by playing with the colors and making some areas lighter and some areas darker. Enjoy!

