

Notes for City of Springfield Paintings by Jerry Ross

May, 2019



McKenzie River Barn

Inspired by Tim Kendall's old barn on his property off of Angels Flight Road, McKenzie River, Oregon. Tim has allowed me to conduct my plein air class there many times. He is also a painter. Anyway, he has his chickens in this old barn, or at least around the backside of it. The barn itself is historic, probably where the homesteaders lived while farming the land. This is a hunting/fishing area. Rugged individualists like Tim, brave enough and skilled enough to create their own water supply from water merging from the mountains, build their own houses, grow some of their own food. The barn is very old and here you see objects leaning against the place creating a nice composition

Nijmegen (The Weigh House in Nijmegen)

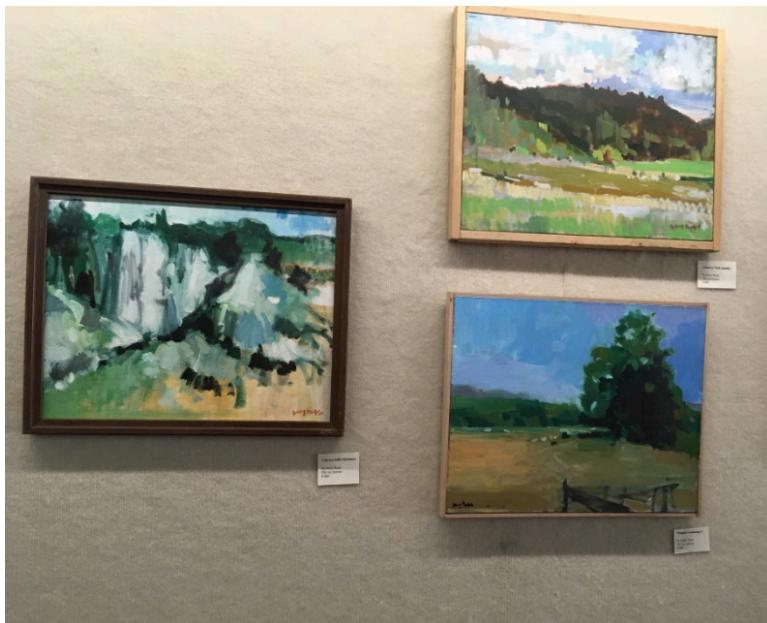
A weigh house or weighing house is a public building at or within which goods are weighed. Most of these buildings were built before 1800, prior to the establishment of international standards for weights. As public control of the weight of goods was very important, they were run by local authorities who would also use them for the levying of taxes on goods transported through or sold within the city. Therefore, weigh houses would often be near a market square or town centre.

Between 1550 and about 1690 people accused of witchcraft were at times brought to a weigh house in order to be subjected to a "witch test" to "prove" their innocence for payment (as nobody was deemed to be a witch after this test[1]). If a person was found to be lighter than a set weight, he or she was deemed guilty. This is similar to the use of a ducking stool.

This was painted en plain air while on a painting sabbatical to the nearby town of Renkum.

Horses in ‘de Veluvezoom’

Veluwezoom National Park is a national park of the Netherlands located in the province of Gelderland. This park is the oldest national park of the Netherlands.[2] It is an area of 50 square kilometers at the southeastern edge of the Veluwe, a complex of terminal push moraines from the Saalian glaciation. It has a pronounced relief by Dutch standards, with the highest point in the park at 110 meters above sea level.[3] It is a private national park, owned by Vereniging Natuurmonumenten, the largest nature conservation organisation in the Netherlands. Here I am painting the wild horses that roam in the park. I am inspired in this piece, by the Dutch Barbizon school that existed and painted around Renkum in the 19th century. The Barbizon school of painters were part of an art movement towards Realism in art, which arose in the context of the dominant Romantic Movement of the time. The Barbizon school was active roughly from 1830 through 1870. It takes its name from the village of Barbizon, France, near the Forest of Fontainebleau, where many of the artists gathered. Some of the most prominent features of this school are its tonal qualities, color, loose brushwork, and softness of form. The same movement existed around Renkum and Oosterbeek in 19th century Netherlands. Artists who were part of the movement near Oosterbeek include Gerard Bilders, Paul Gabriël, Barend Cornelis Koekkoek, Jacob Maris, Matthijs Maris, Willem Maris, Anton Mauve, Hendrik Mesdag, Willem Roelofs, and Jan Hendrik Weissenbruch.



Cascata delle Marmore

Inspired by a visit to Umbria living in Torreorsina just down the road from Cascata delle Marmore. The Cascata delle Marmore (Marmore Falls) is a man-made

waterfall created by the ancient Romans. Its total height is 165 m (541 feet), making it the tallest man-made waterfall in the world. Of its 3 sections, the top one is the tallest, at 83 m (272 feet).

It is located 7.7 km from Terni, a provincial capital of the Italian region of Umbria. Its source is a portion of the waters of the river Velino (the rest of the river flows into a hydroelectric power plant), after flowing through Piediluco lake near the community of Marmore. It pours into the valley below formed by the river Nera. Its flow is turned on and off according to a published schedule, to satisfy the needs of tourists and the power company alike. Tourists try to be there the moment the gates are opened to see the powerful rush of water. This was painted en plain air while living in Torreorsina. It is a loose brush rendition from afar, a position established with great difficulty but attainable.

Amazon Park (small)

My favorite park in Eugene, Oregon. It has wonderful views of distant hills. There is a dog run area and then bike/walking paths that go off in several directions with large meadows and a wet land area. I have captured the late summer atmosphere and the variety of greens that characterize this park. The dark green south hills of Eugene are in the background to provide a contrast for the brighter greens of the foreground trees and bushes. The dashes and dashes are placed to create shapes and forms that portray the gravitas of this simple yet complex scene.

Oregon Landscape 2

On the edge of Eugene and Springfield there are pastoral scenes with cows grazing near streams. This is the result of going out one day, en plein air, and painting informally, in a loose brush fashion, a scene of this nature. Regardless of the exact location, the broken down fence in the extreme foreground does not block the movement of the viewer. Eye movement, hopefully, goes straight on into the scene of grazing cows and the simple large shape of the trees to the right.



Abbadia Tuscany

Inspired by a recent trip to Tuscany (Abbadia near Montepulciano). I liked this scene because it was very pastoral. The rolling Tuscan hills was set apart by a uniform stand of trees that outlined a large open field. My wife and I were staying at a brew pub owned by friends. Above the pub was a new apartment where we stayed. Walking from the apartment to the town provided an opportunity to paint the farm fields in the vicinity of tow, The result is this landscape in oils in my sketchy style.

Italian Worker

While living in Pari, Tuscany a small town near the coast, I made a portrait of this Italian laborer. The palette matches the colors of the scene around the subject and his clothing. Vincenzo worked on construction and farming. H was a very unassuming person who was always willing to lend a hand or offer good advice during our short stay in Pari.

Angela in Blue

This is a smaller study of "Angela in Denum." The artist's wife, Angela Ross, on the Oregon coast. An example of the "macchia" underpainting and partial overlay of pigment giving this portrait an abstract quality. This characterizes the artist's "Vinci" style which is a hats off to drawing as a means of observation (Leonardo) combined with the artist's interest in "spot" or "stain" technique from the Italian I Macchiaioli. This is just a detail (the head) which I did as an exercise but it is very true to the original but can never be a true duplicate. Hopefully it captures the dignity and free spirited character of my beloved wife, Angela.



Italian Church Scene

Inspired by the work of Giacomo Favretto. Born in Venice into a family of humble origin, his father was a carpenter and he spent many years in the family workshop. Favretto enrolled at the Academy of Fine Arts in 1864, where he trained under Pompeo Marino Molmenti. He was said to have been discovered in a stationer's shop cutting out silhouettes to make a living. By age 30, he had lost sight in one eye. He was a very strong figurative painter specializing in domestic and genre scenes. I took the opportunity of abstracting from one of his church interiors reducing his often photo realistic shapes to I Macchiaioli style large dabs of color.

Polly

Inspired by a friend from Emilio-Romagna, Polly, who is an art restorationist and a great character. This is painted from a sketch that I made into a poster for an exhibit. I have since lost touch with Polly but have fond memories of Andrea Guerra, her ex, and her, during long summer in Livergnano. I was staying in the cave side writing studio apartment of Pier Cesare Bori for the summer and the two neighbors, Polly and Andrea, befriended me. We traveled together to the Tuscan coast, hiked together in nearby mountains, and generally partied together throughout the summer. Later on, years after, it appeared that the two were separating and at one moment I caught Polly in a sad mood which became this painting made after an earlier sketch.



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Primo Levi

Inspired by the life and writings of Primo Levi, the Italian holocaust survivor, chemist, writer, and important figure in Italian contemporary culture. Here I have tightened my loose verismo style a bit to carefully render his face, especially the eyes which have seen things no human should ever have to see. Levi was a guerrilla resistance fighter in the northern mountains of Italy during WWII. He was captured and sent to various concentration camps.

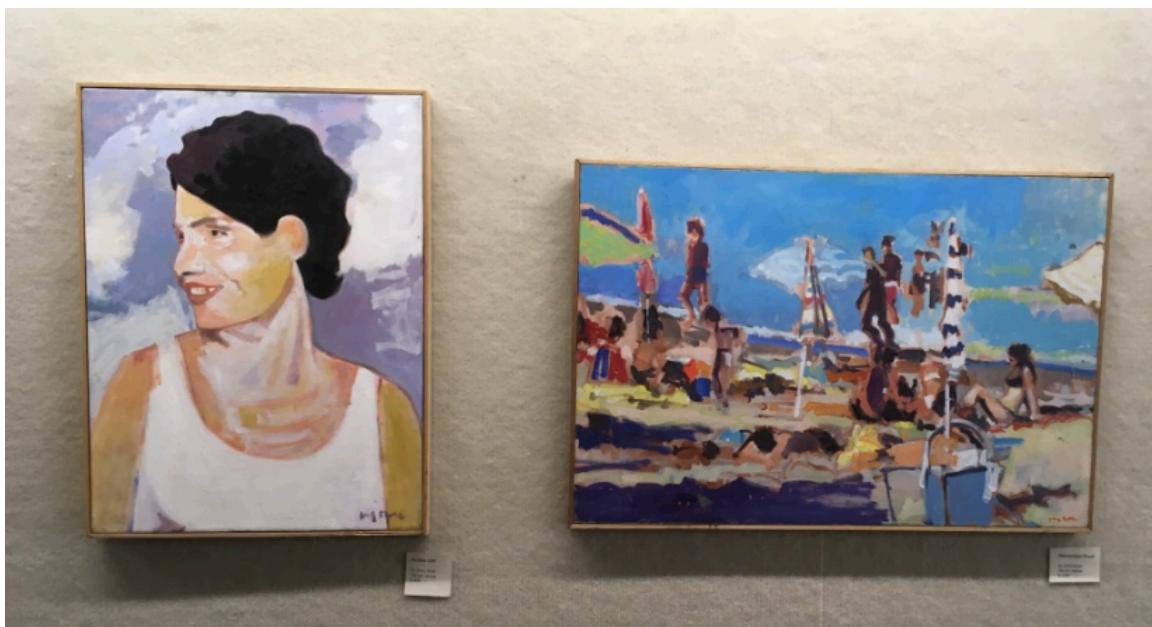
Wikipedia: He was the author of several books, novels, collections of short stories, essays, and poems. His best-known works include *If This Is a Man* (1947, published as *Survival in Auschwitz* in the United States), his account of the year he spent as a prisoner in the Auschwitz concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Poland; and *The Periodic Table* (1975), linked to qualities of the elements, which the Royal Institution of Great Britain named the best science book ever written.

Italo Svevo

Aron Ettore Schmitz (19 December 1861 – 13 September 1928), better known by the pseudonym Italo Svevo (Italian: ['i:talo 'zve:vo]), was an Italian writer, businessman, novelist, playwright, and short story writer.

A close friend of Irish novelist and poet James Joyce, Svevo was considered a pioneer of the psychological novel in Italy and is best known for his classic Modernist novel *La Coscienza di Zeno* (1923), a work that had a profound effect on the movement

Here I have painted him with a yellow background to contrast with his violet suit. He has a very classical presence and bearing, very elegant and intellectual.



Sicilian Girl

La ragazza siciliana (The Sicilian girl) was inspired by a visit to Emilia Romagna where I met a Sicilian girl worker at lunch with friends. She had this earthy, southern beauty which really came out, on this brilliantly sunny day, in her skin tones and smile. She was among four or five workers, all friends of Andrea Guerra and Polly Piva, who were taking a lunch break when I sketched her. One of my art forms is creating an oil painting from pencil sketches. In this practice, I consider the sketch a short-hand encoding of the portrait information which comes to life in the oil portrait.

Martinsicuro Beach

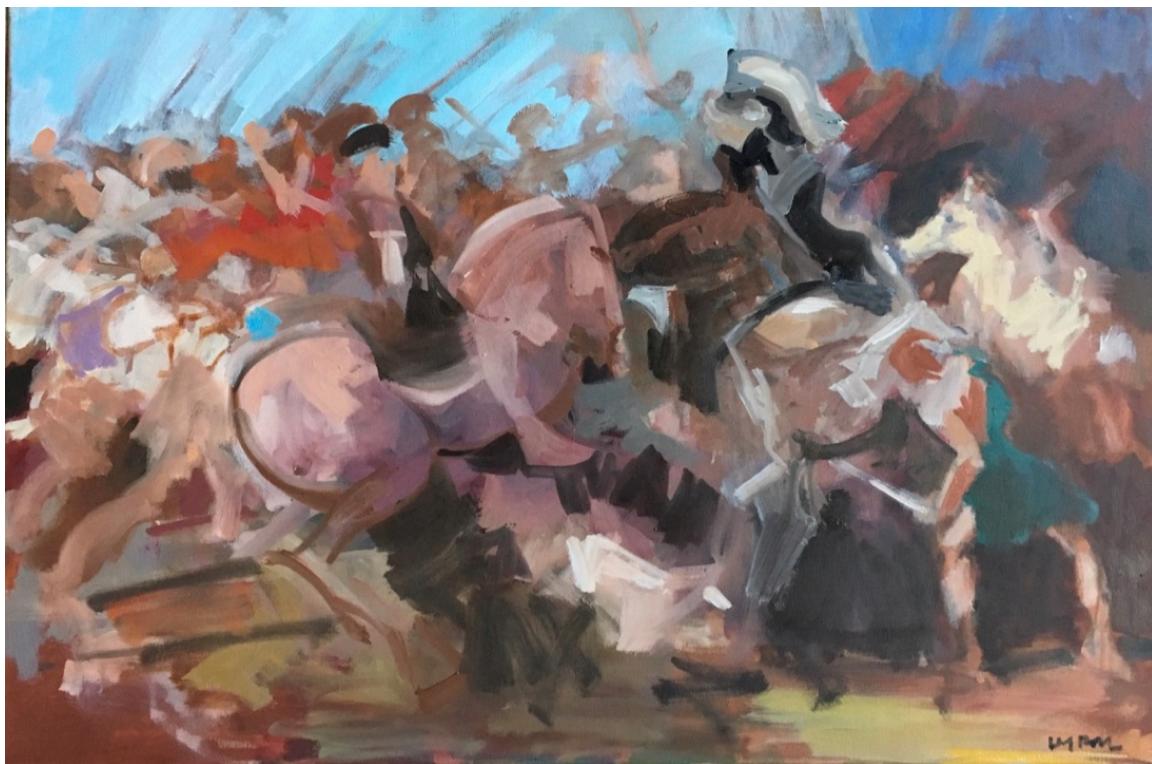
This is the last remaining painting in a whole series of figurative beach scenes painted after a visit to Martinsicuro. Martinsicuro is a town and comune in the province of Teramo, Abruzzo in central Italy. It is a car traffic free beach town, although cars are allowed in the center. The beach area along the Adriatic has many hotels with beach chairs and umbrellas. I spent many hours drawing from our beach chairs while staying in Hotel "Sympathy". This hotel was connected in some manner with a local culinary school and waiters hand white jackets. Mostly Italians were staying in the hotel. There were also Russians and Germans. I became interested in the whole concept of "the Italian beach" and its culture of families vacationing in close proximity to one another along the beach.



Garibaldi (large)

My Italian friends tell me this is a "strong Garibaldi" ("Che potenza questo Garibaldi!"). This one is a mixed media piece with print to canvas and subsequent additional painting in oil paints on top of the digital print to canvas using the

original painting as a guide. Thus a new original. Much larger than previous versions, this one is 24 x 36 inches framed in black wood. A good choice for collectors who would like a Jerry Ross. This painting has graphical qualities which a balance of line and mass, pastel colors, an excellent conversation piece.



Battle between Constantine and Licinius

Inspired by the work of Rubens. My "comments" on classical European art involve abstraction and attention to figurative movement which I consider dynamic and providing a robust energy often missing in modern art. The narrative and metaphors involved in the conflict between these two important figures in Roman history are mirrored today in our own political conflicts. The challenge of abstracting complex battle scenes requires patience and persistence because "not all dabs are equal" in the sense that size, shape, and hue all add or detract from the effect depending on the success or failure of the combination of shapes and color harmonies. In this instance, a harmonious whole has been sustained through a process of trial and error, assisted by patience and time to contemplate the result at various stages of its development.



Dutch Nobleman

I was in Renkum, Holland doing an art residency in painting. I have always been enamored of Frans Hals and his loose brush portraiture. In the past I have successfully copied Hals. I especially like his portrait Vincent Laurensz. van der Vinne. In this version, I have substituted an imaginary face, perhaps more contemporary, but still an attempt to depict a young, aristocratic Dutchman. Frans Hals the Elder (/ha:ləs/; [hals]; c. 1582 – 26 August 1666) was a Dutch Golden Age painter, normally of portraits, who lived and worked in Haarlem. He is notable for his loose painterly brushwork, and he helped introduce this lively style of painting into Dutch art. Hals played an important role in the evolution of 17th-century group portraiture.

On the Road to Montepulciano

Inspired by a walk from Abbadia to Montepulciano when I passed an area with a great view. Enveloped by trees one could see distant pastures and hills with greenery everywhere. I like how the foreground trees frame the more distant pastures. Angela and I decided to attempt a walk to Montepulciano which ended up taking about an hour until we turned back. Along the way were vineyards galore. We love this area and the people who we found to be generous and friendly. We stopped to talk to several elderly farmers who were going about their work. Fortunately we both speak Italian so we were able to converse. The green trees and shrubbery gently frame the farm that we only get a peak of but it allows us to imagine going into that space. The distant green mountains remind us that the hills are also filled with vineyards and that this precious area is rich in culture.

and agronomy. My painting style, exemplified by this painting, allows me to create shapes and forms that are distributed in a harmonious composition to produce a feeling of stability and harmony with nature that calms and invigorates the soul of the viewer.



Abstract Oregon Landscape

This is a painting inspired by Oregon hills and mountains covered with trees. For quite a while I have been exploring the mysteries of the Oregon forests and mountains trying to abstract and simplify the shapes of such scenes while maintaining a strong structure to the compositions. I have invented various terms for the divisions between the various layers of such scenes. For example the division between sky and land, I call "the first division." In this particular painting the technique of "edge maccchia" is used, which I use to refer to the blended edge of the sky and land shapes or wherever there is a soft transition between the various layers of a landscape, like middle ground and foreground.

Clouds over Spencer's Butte

Inspired by a vista of Spencer Buttes seen from our driveway in the South Hills of Eugene. When the weather is stormy and clouds are moving quickly, nature seems to provide the artist with a complete spectacle of shape and form and color lending itself, so to speak, to the quick and spontaneous oil sketch as the best way to capture the power and majesty of the phenomenon.



Mt. Baldy

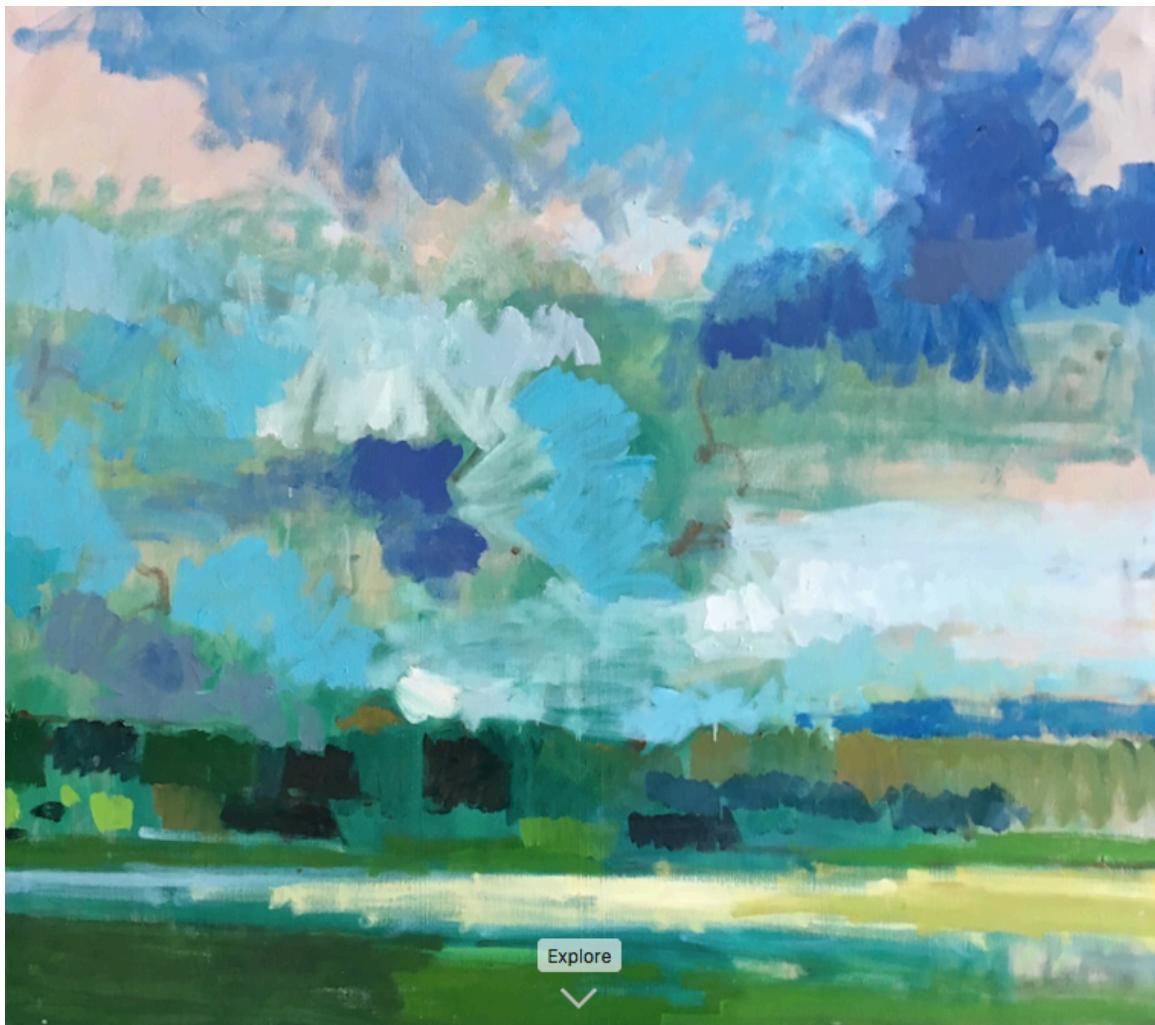
A short drive from my painting studio in the big red barn of Aragon Alpaca Farm on Dillard Road, is a park with trails leading to Mount Baldy. My favorite painting spot is a pull off near the main gate of a small development. This spot opens into a broad panorama of the Willamette Valley looking south of Eugene towards Lane Community College and distant mountains.

Ezio

Named after the subject, an Italian youth who stayed with us in Eugene as part of the Servas organization, a travelers group for hosting and visiting individuals focused on world peace and a better understanding. We have stayed in touch with this young man over the years and, in fact, were able to connect during our most recent trip to Milan.

Oregon Landscape 1

This small oil sketch is of the Oregon countryside, the exact location might be Mount Pisgah, but in any event it was painted very quickly en plein air. It represents a stand of trees Pisgah with distant mountains.



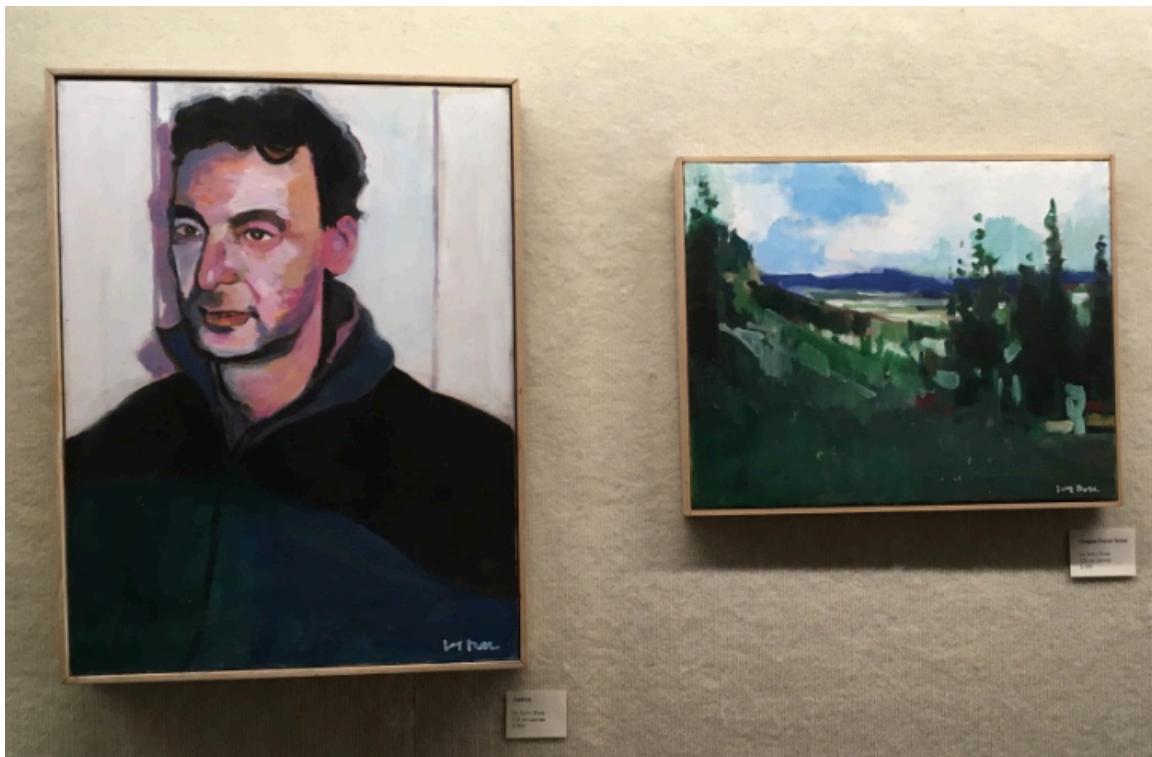
Amazon Park (large)

Inspired by Eugene's Amazon Park, a "central park" for our small city (population 150K) yet a wide and expansive area with great vistas. My style is informed by the Italian I Macchiaioli and the use of "macchie" or spots of color to compose a unified and harmonious whole. The park has several dog runs, a swimming pool, and a long running/jogging path. Next to the pool area is a playground. Blues and greens dominate the palette yet ochres and yellows are found on the ground which vibrates with the bluws-violets in the sky.



Oregon Landscape

Inspired by the dramatic Fall views in Eugene from almost any neighborhood. We live in the Southeast Hills area of Eugene with mountain views. The colors are extraordinary in the autumn with many shades of blue and green as well as reds and orange and yellows.



Portrait of Andrea Guerra

Andrea is a good friend who was living in Livergnano when we first met him. He is Polly Piva's ex (see "Polly") and he is employed as an arborist and tree surgeon who works for local farms and churches in the Emilia Romagna area. We have had many visits to Livergnano where I stayed one summer in the late Professor Pier Cesare Bori's writing studio.

Oregon Forest Scene

Inspired by Eugene's Hills in certain parts of West Eugene where the land created steep slopes and inclines with trees that filter distant views of the Willamette Valley.



Dutch Treat

Inspired by art residency in Renkum, Holland where I am painting in August 2017. A short bike ride into the countryside and I came across this sun lit scene that struck me as very poetic. Getting back to the studio to complete the work took more time but feel I did capture the feeling if this vista. I attempted, in this work, to capture the beautiful light that falls on the open fields in the Netherlands. I was also mindful of the Oosterbeek school which existed in this area, often called the “Dutch Barbizon.” They were a group of 19th century artists who lived and painted in the area and along the Rhine River and in and around the town of Oosterbeek not too far from Renkum. I took a bike to Oosterbeek then crossed the Rhine and came back to Renkum of the other bank of the river.

Valiano1

Painted in Valiano near Montepulciano. Angela and I were staying at a property owned by the Goracci family. It is a converted brick factory, now an elegant villa with cypress trees surrounded by rolling hills of farmland, barns, and vineyards. Although abstracted, is a view towards Montepulciano in the same area that a bullet train passes through. There are red tiles leading from the main gate into the property. This “sketch-painting” retains the red brown sienna sketch lines

characteristic of my verismo" style of non-finito (unfinished) areas. After the thinking and philosophy of the I Macchiaioli group of Tuscan painters that believed in non-finito as a way to keep the painting always fresh and vital.

Garibaldi (small)

My Italian friends tell me this is a "strong Garibaldi" ("Che potenza questo Garibaldi!"). This is a digital print to canvas that has been painted on with oils to recreate the sold original painting from ten or so years ago. Garibaldi was the "George Washington" of Italy having led three long military and revolutionary campaigns to unify Italy. The story of Garibaldi and his wife Anita read like Homer's epic poem the Odyssey. Like a 19th century version of Ulysses, Garibaldi survived sea battles, innumerable forced marches over rugged mountains, attacks by armies from multiple nations seeking to colonize Italy. His and Anita's heroism is memorialized in almost every city, town, and village with statues and busts.





Venice (The Grand Canal)

This painting was painted in the studio after a trip to Venice. It represents one of our favorite places and views in Venice, namely the Grand Canal. Painted many times by Canaletto, this scene is world famous. Working from our own photographs, I wanted to capture the color and beauty of the scene with gondolas and buildings and docks and the green water, brilliant sky and poetry and romance of the place.

Valiano 2

Painted in Valiano near Montepulciano. Angela and I were staying at a property owned by the Goracci family. It is a converted brick factory, now an elegant villa with cypress trees surrounded by rolling hills of farmland, barns, and vineyards. Although abstracted, is a view towards Montepulciano in the same area that a bullet train passes through. There are red tiles leading from the main gate into the property. This “sketch-painting” retains the red brown sienna sketch lines characteristic of my verismo” style of non-finito (unfinished) areas. After the thinking and philosophy of the I Macchiaioli group of Tuscan painters that believed in non-finito as a way to keep the painting always fresh and vital.

Tuscan Veduta

Somewhere in Tuscany on one of our many drives visiting small medieval towns. I recreated the feeling of this scene from sketch notes. The town, built on top of a tall hill, seems to float in the air and provides a vast 360 degree panorama of the beautiful Tuscan countryside. But towards dusk, captured here, the distant veduta (view from on high), gets darker and more mysterious.