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international artist

**INSIDE THE STUDIOS OF THE
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BUCHANAN***Indirect Painting Methods*

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DRAWINGS**
with Ann Dyer



My easel and tools at the ready.

A PAINTER'S JOURNEY

PART 3

The Studio Boat

In this seven-part series, artist John Hulsey takes you on a visual journey through his outdoor and studio painting processes.

Shortly after moving to Argenteuil in 1871, and inspired by his friend Charles-François Daubigny, Claude Monet purchased a boat that he converted to a bateau-atelier, or studio boat, so he could paint the views and reflections from out on the water. The ethereal views of the Seine, Oise and Epte rivers that he painted are some of his most loved paintings today. His example inspired me to buy a used jon boat to serve as my own modest outdoor painting studio when I work on the large pond near my studio. After a thorough scrape-down and repaint, I named the boat after my nickname for my wife: "Annabelle." The boat is now equipped with an electric motor, oars, two anchors and a pair of swivel seats, but actually has built-in seating for five people, plus dogs. It has a flat bottom and when anchored fore and aft it is a very

stable platform for painting, even in the wind. In fact, I wrote this article while sitting in my boat out on the water.

The pond sits in a bowl of mostly heavily wooded land, which has been returning to a natural state for over 40 years. I have been painting this pond and forests for three decades now, primarily from the shore. Painting on the water is qualitatively different from working on land. Loading the boat and moving up the channel to the main pond always feels like a relaxing journey to somewhere new. The experience of sitting out on a large, flat surface filled with light and beauty opens the mind and imagination. The views from the water are strikingly different than on shore, and seasonal changes affect the subject matter and the way light works its magic there. Perhaps the biggest compositional difference is that, when on the water, one is floating on a kind of mirror. There is no "ground," and on very still days, it can sometimes be hard to distinguish sky from water. Monet especially loved playing with this visual confusion in his water paintings, and I feel the same.



Fall color strings in palette. My first action was to develop both a cool and a warm string from which I would work the entire painting.

My Process

Without ground below, how should the composition be divided? It occurred to me that I did not need to think in a rectangle as I would on land. Instead, I work mostly in a square format whenever possible. The square format helps me achieve a couple of important things:

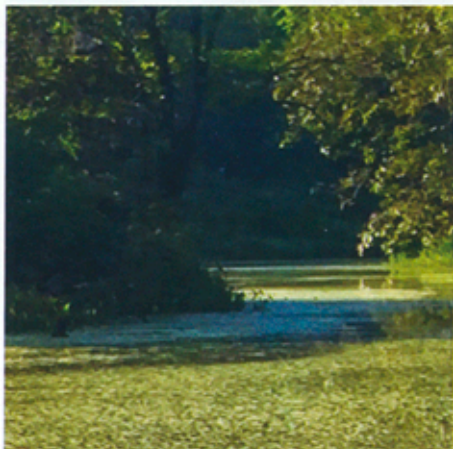
1. Squares lend themselves to interesting and unusual compositional designs in nature.
2. The format is not often seen in landscape painting and so signals to the viewer that something different is going on in this picture. Indeed there is!
3. The window aspect of the square allows me to present vignettes of light and time in my work.

These paintings are not meant to be representational landscapes as such, but deep meditations on nature itself and our relationship to it.

As I described in the October/November and December/January issues of *International Artist*, I have also changed the way I paint in order to more fully



MY ART IN THE MAKING Morning Pond I



My subject for *Summer III* was the duckweed-covered channel into the back pond.



Stage 1 I always tone the canvas to knock down the bright white of the oil primed linen and to create a middle-value tone.



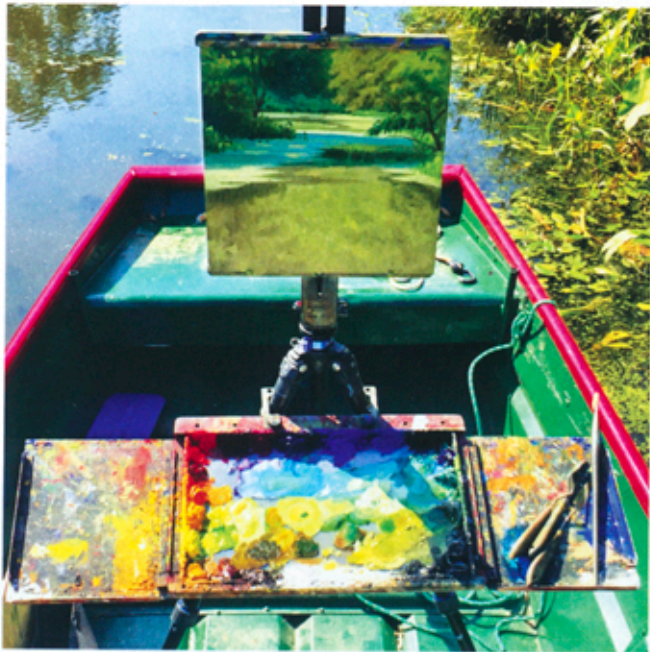
Stage 2 I wipe the wet tone with a towel to adjust the value and create some interesting textures.



Stage 3 With a large bristle brush I create a color block-in, getting the drawing in while guessing at the values.



Stage 4 I work the block-in with my painting knives, refining shapes, values, temperatures, but not edges.



Stage 5 Here I am developing edges while zeroing in on the final vision for the painting.



Stage 6 Final Painting *Summer III*, oil on linen, 12 x 12" (30 x 30 cm)

express my experience on and in the environment of the pond. I now use different tools in my work—painting knives. The combination of a new format and new tools was a release from old ways of thinking about painting, and old, comfortable ways of working. This can be a scary place to be, creatively, but I have come to realize that, for me, it is the way forward. I believe that for an artist to be truly creative in the moment, we must be right on the edge of discomfort. This space of not knowing what comes next allows inspiration to enter unfettered by our usual habits. There can be spectacular failures in this space, but welcoming failure is right where we often learn the most.

— Nature here in Kansas does not entertain like the ocean or mountains do. It requires us to extend ourselves into it, to sit quietly for a time and draw on our deepest sensibilities. The more I focus on it, the larger the world before me seems to grow. I become aware of connections to everything else. The universal becomes expressed in the local. Perhaps this awareness is partially caused by what the Japanese call *shinrin-yoku*,

or “bathing in forest air,” and I believe that there is power in it. My intention is to put that power into this series of paintings and the large studio versions which follow. To that end, I have devoted my time and energy over the last two years to the development of an extensive body of work focused on this

one subject. It is the reason I bought the studio boat. In two years, I will present an exhibition of this body of work, which I have titled, *Transcendence*. It will officially open at the Albrecht-Kemper Museum in St. Joseph, Missouri, December 2, 2022, and travel to other museums around the country. [a](#)

ABOUT THE ARTIST

John Hulsey is a nationally recognized artist and accomplished master painter in watercolor, oil and pastel. A sought-after teacher who has been teaching painting for more than 35 years, Hulsey maintains an active studio practice along with his international and domestic teaching commitments. The recipient of numerous art awards and art grants, his work has been exhibited in group and solo exhibitions in galleries across the United States, from New York to California. During the 10 years Hulsey worked in New York, his paintings were featured on the cover of *Time* magazine and most of the major book and magazine publishers. His paintings are included in a number of private collections.

He has been awarded residencies by the National Park Service at Glacier National Park, Montana; Yosemite National Park, California; and Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado. Hulsey and his painter-wife, Ann Trusty, founded The Artist's Road teaching site in 2010 to share their lifetime of experience in art to an international audience. To date, they have created over 750 articles and interviews on art for the site. Some of his teaching videos can be found on YouTube at John Hulsey Fine Art.

Conact at www.johnhulsey.com | www.theartistsroad.net