

SUZIE GREER BAKER

Paint What Makes You Say WHOA!

This Texas artist set lofty goals for her paintings and professional activities. She achieved many of those objectives through serious study, interaction with other painters, and painting what excited her.

By M. Stephen Doherty



Alpenglow
2017, oil on linen, 12 x 9 in.
Private collection
Plein air

When Suzie Greer Baker and her family moved back to the United States in 2010 after living in the Middle East, she quickly established a set of goals for the development of her paintings and her involvement in plein air events. “Although I had been painting outdoors since I was a teenager, I didn’t know plein air events existed,” the artist recalls. “I regularly planned painting trips with other artists, and it was during one trip to Laguna Beach, California, that I learned about the annual Laguna Beach Plein Air Painting Invitational. That was a revelation to me, and I set about learning all I could of this movement and how I could be involved!”

Baker studied graphic design and fine art at Louisiana Tech University and received a deep and broad education in representational painting. However, she needed additional training to master plein air painting. She got that by painting on a regular basis, attending the annual Plein Air Convention & Expo, reading blogs and books, reviewing magazine articles, and participating in workshops with nationally known artists. One of the blogs she read was John Pototschnik’s profile of Texas artist Jill Carver. “Jill talked specifically about using outdoor paintings as sources of studio work,” Baker explains, “and I was so impressed with her work and ideas that I signed up for one of her workshops.

“Jill’s workshop was loaded with valuable information about painting and about shifting from outdoor to studio painting. I left with several action items, one of which was to be more thoughtful about what and how I painted, and another was about painting larger, faster, and with greater appreciation for gestured strokes of oil color. I learned that by making thoughtful use of *notan* studies, compositional sketches, and color studies, I could respond to momentary events in nature more effectively and spontaneously.”

As Baker learned more about plein air painting, she knew she had to make a sober assessment of her work. “I attended the Plein Air Convention and other major national shows and saw just how high the bar was. I have to honestly say, that bar is always moving. When I participate in a workshop or a plein air event, I want to aim to be a better painter at the end of a week than I was on the first day. I want to take full advantage of the opportunity to learn how others interpret similar subjects, how they might edit their paintings, and how they express their own voices as painters.”



On the Street Where You Live
 2017, oil on linen,
 6 x 30 in.
 Private collection
 Plein air



Suzie Greer Baker



Sierra Morgan
 2017, oil on linen, 10 x 12 in.
 Collection the artist
 Plein air



View from Camp
 2017, oil on linen,
 10 x 12 in.
 Collection the artist
 Plein air

Easton Country Store
 2017, oil on linen,
 16 x 12 in.
 Collection the artist
 Plein air

ARTIST DATA

NAME: Suzie Greer Baker
BIRTH YEAR: 1970
LOCATION: Shenandoah, TX
WEBSITE: www.suziebaker.com



Door County Paint a Memory

2017, oil on linen, 10 x 12 in.

Collection the artist

Plein air



Carl and Aimee Take a Break

2017, oil on linen, 10 x 12 in.

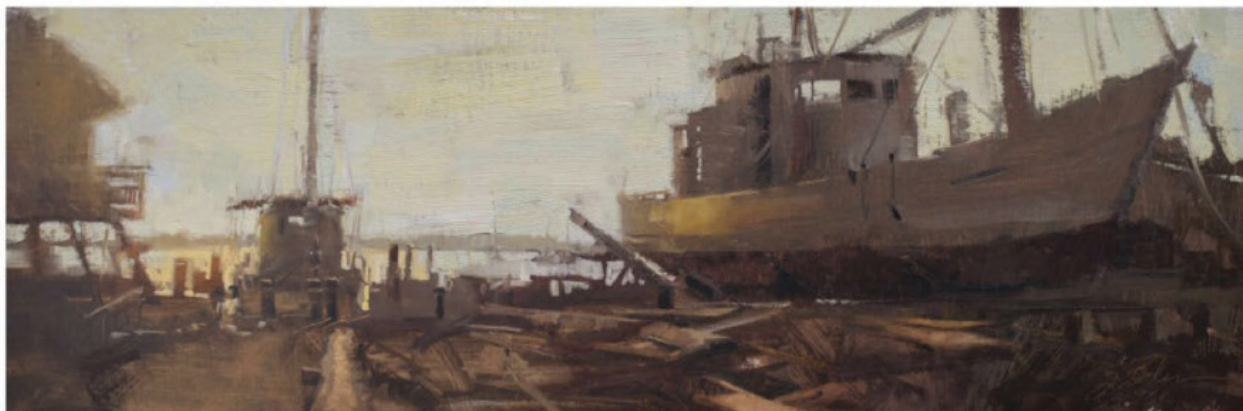
Collection the artist

Plein air



Door County Test of Time

2007, oil on linen,
8 x 18 in.
Collection the artist
Plein air



Log Built Boat

2017, oil on linen,
10 x 30 in.
Private collection
Plein air

In an effort to “reach a higher bar,” Baker took advantage of workshops offered by the Woodlands Art League in Spring, Texas. Among the nationally known artists who taught those workshops were Robert Liberace, Daniel Gerhartz, Judith Carducci, and Clayton J. Beck III. In addition, she met every week to paint from the model, and she joined other artists on painting trips. One of Baker’s recent trips was to the Sierra mountains, where she created a series of color studies to inspire her in the studio.

Painting Supplies & Process

Baker works on two different sizes of EasyL easel and paints on Centurion Oil Primed Deluxe Linen panels; she also often paints on

primed or shellacked birch panels. The palette of colors Baker uses includes transparent red oxide (her new substitute for burnt sienna), permanent alizarin crimson, quinacridone red, ultramarine blue, cobalt blue, cadmium yellow lemon or cadmium yellow light, yellow ochre, Michael Harding’s Indian yellow red shade (her new favorite yellow), and titanium white. She adds other colors to her plein air palette (such as sap green, Gamblin’s Radiant colors, cerulean blue hue, and others) as those convenience colors are needed.

When picking a location for painting, Baker opens herself to unexpected, spontaneous, and momentary patterns of light and shadow that convey a sense of life and energy in the landscape. “I look for a change in the light and

atmosphere that makes me stop and say ‘whoa,’” she says. “I search for those spontaneous ‘a-ha moments’ that often occur in the early morning or the end of the day. During those golden hours, everything is bathed in a warm tone, and I quickly block in the illuminated shapes, establish the architecture of a drawing, and respond to the momentary lighting effect. I don’t have much of a plan because my priority is to respond to what happens as the light changes. I like to maintain evidence of the artist’s hand at work, so I avoid smoothing out brush marks and edges after I’ve made a meaningful statement about what I’ve just seen.”

Baker is willing to scrape or wipe oil colors off a panel so she can revise a painting on the spot or return to the same location another day




Door County Twinkle Lights
 2017, oil on linen, 12 x 12 in.
 Private collection
 Plein air

to complete the painting. She did that while participating in a plein air event in Telluride, Colorado, last summer, and her efforts were rewarded with the First Place Artists' Choice award. "I started a 12 x 9-inch sunset painting, and after working on it for a couple of hours, I decided I had painted the mountains too dark and I didn't really capture the sense of light that attracted me in the first place," Baker says. "I scraped down the offending area and took

the painting back to the same location the next evening. I quickly painted the alpenglow as it moved up the mountain and finally felt I had accurately captured what I saw in that first a-ha moment."

Having begun her plein air career with a few specific objectives, Baker has now gone way beyond those initial targets. This last year alone she participated in plein air events in Telluride, Easton, Maryland; Door County, Wisconsin;

Laguna Beach, California; and others, and as mentioned above, she won Artists' Choice at the Telluride Plein Air Festival. 

M. STEPHEN DOHERTY is editor-in-chief of Plein Air magazine.



See more of Suzie Greer Baker's paintings in the expanded digital edition of Plein Air.

ARTIST PROFILE



Sunrise on the Farm
2017, oil on linen, 10 x 12 in.
Collection the artist
Plein air