



SOPHIE AMAUGER | FRANCE

Plein air painting is not so popular in France, except for a few spring and summer festivals. The most famous has been held for the past 30 years in villages and cities around Brittany. Open to painters of all skill levels working in every medium, the event travels to a different place each weekend from the end of April to the end of October.

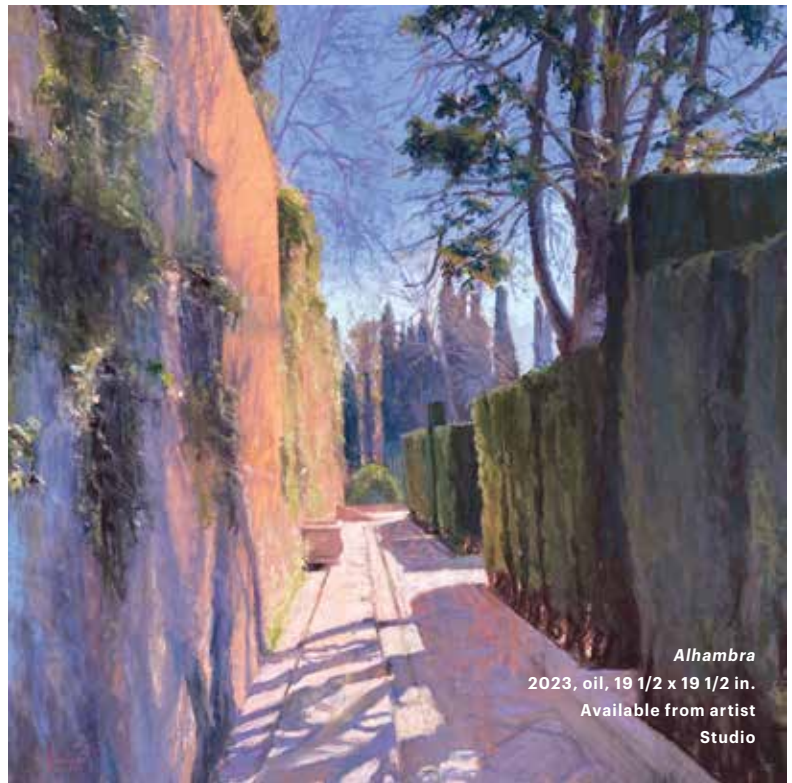
Another festival takes place in Normandy, organized by French Plein Air Painters, an association that promotes plein air painting, especially in a large format. I live so far from Normandy and Brittany that I never get to participate in these events, but I have artist friends I meet up with to paint.

My favorite subjects are those with a special quality of light and strong dark values in opposition — it could be a landscape, a garden, trees. A good subject touches my heart, my soul. In Alhambra, for example, I was impressed by the light in the shadows. I took the time to think about how to translate it accurately — what colors and composition would best catch the light. I didn't paint this scene on location, but I started my painting-process reflection on site. In the studio I painted it very quickly on colored UART paper. I was surprised to find it was all there in my head and that the feelings I had as I worked were the same as those I experienced firsthand.

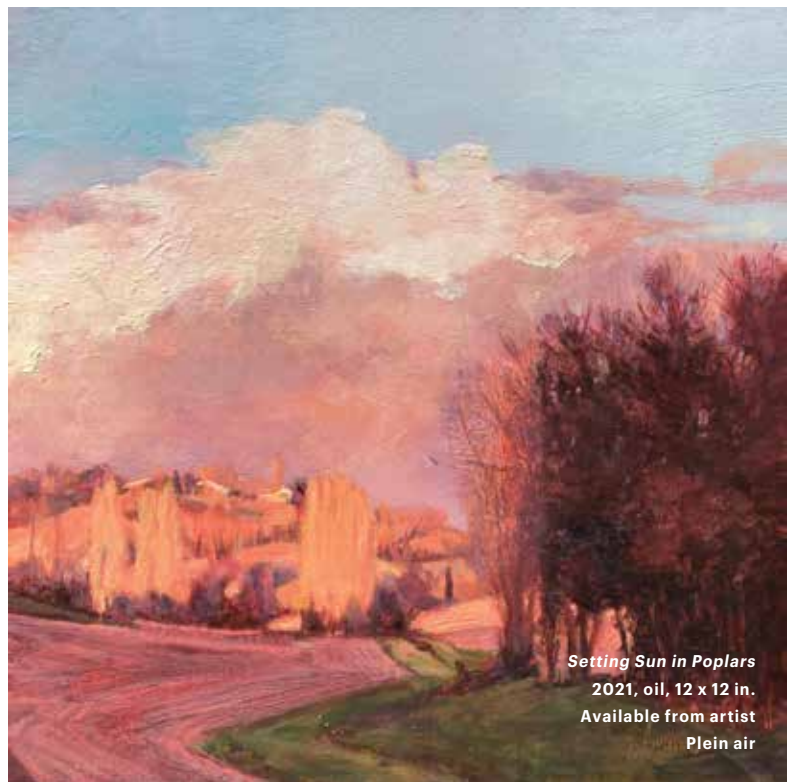
In general, I spend a lot of time on location looking for the best composition and taking in the feel of the area. I try to finish my plein air pieces outdoors, but if I have to take them back to my studio, I give myself a definite period of time to finish, and then do no more. Thanks to all my plein air experience, I'm able to paint in my studio with no obvious differences in my work



August Near Catus
2017, pastel, 10 1/2 x 10 1/2 in.
Available from artist
Plein air and studio



Alhambra
2023, oil, 19 1/2 x 19 1/2 in.
Available from artist
Studio



Setting Sun in Poplars
2021, oil, 12 x 12 in.
Available from artist
Plein air

Very often I use my outdoor paintings to make larger works in my studio. If I'm in a place I would love to paint, but I'm not there to work, I take some pictures, with my painter's eyes — better than nothing! If I can, I make a quick sketch, paying particular attention to the values. Back in the studio, I look at my photos of the scene before I get started, but I don't keep my eyes on my computer while painting to avoid detail. To include too much is often to sacrifice the painting.

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