

The Artist's Almanac

October 2004

If you are away from Tennessee, this is the time to be homesick.

Here, fickle Spring comes babbling in, promising more than Summer can possibly deliver, and is soon gone; Fall, by contrast, is a savory time of reward and recollection, gliding slowly like a golden stream through September, October and November into mid-December.

October is its zenith, when nature holds its breath and shows us, "See; see what I can do." Spring's colors were concentrated in the green-surrounded gardens; now the very woods and pastures sort themselves into every imaginable hue.

For the artist playing with colors it is time to clear the bench: aureolian, lemon, orange, terre verte, phthalo, turquoise, cerulean, ultramarine, rose, alizarin, sienna, umber, ochres, violets of all shades, with magenta and Paynes gray – all hit the ground running. Restraint is required, knowing that only shadows allow us to see the light.

Finally, the artist realizes that no combination can adequately capture the appeal Autumn makes to all the senses – smell, taste, hearing, sight, and touch.

Yet, in October he must be outdoors, and try. For in December's dark drizzles and January's snows, he may open a jar of Summer's tomatoes or fig preserves to taste the sun and look above his mantle to see the welcome warmth of an autumn day.

Not for naught are homecoming games held at this time. We peer into each other's faces looking for witness that we once were and still are. We recount and sum up our stories with our fellow alums.

Children have no alums and this month they don masks and pretend to be monsters to terrify each other. An older culture to the south celebrates *El Dia De Muertos* on which they welcome their departed loved ones to a meal.

It is a lovely way of recognizing that all life dies and is reborn. Gardeners know this and examine next years swelling buds pushing the old leaves from the branch. We wait now expectant as October's symphony begins and moves slowly towards its grand crescendo on All Hallows Eve.