

The Artist's Almanac

September 2007

All your renown is like the summer flower that blooms and dies; because the sunny glow which brings it forth, soon slays with parching power.

- Dante Alighieri

I awake with a start – is that rain I hear? We had none in August, unless you count a couple of hot ten-minute sprinkles. Between them, sere days with highs above a hundred. We lost the great rain lottery. None of our horses came in, and the dry fallen leaves litter our patio like so many losing pari-mutuel tickets littering the stands after the races are over.

The trees look like old friends humbled by poverty and disease. We avert our gaze, guilty that we can water only the tenderest plants within the radius of our hose. Each morning I carry a jug of water to the little cherry I planted this spring and assure it that better days lie ahead. The brown grass will green again, but will the dogwoods brighten our woods next spring?

The woods are browning for the second time this year. A sharp freeze in April gave us a springtime wearing the colors of autumn. Orchards bear no fruit, and August finished the corn. Farmers are sending their cattle early to market for lack of grass and hay. In the 1951 drought we imported hay from Canada and got the thorny bull thistle that plagues our pastures. Perhaps the cattle will learn to eat kudzu - nothing kills it.



September reminds us there is life after August. Mornings are cooler now and our energy, which flagged even in our air-conditioned houses, returns, and we make plans. Long walks become an option and sketching in *plein air*. This is an excellent time for that.

Plein air sketching restores excitement to the making of art. Rarely is a picture finished in the field. A work of art involves a period of gestation between conception and birth. Sketching is to art as sex is to birth; many are called, few are chosen.



The Visitation – Bill Puryear, Artist

John Constable was the father of impressionism. Mentor to Monet and Pissaro, he never knew photography. He, like Monet, Cézanne and others who followed him, would sit for hours before his favorite subject, in every light, absorbing its essence, probing ever deeper for its spirit of place. These series paintings of the great cathedrals at Salisbury and Rouen, the meadows of East Anglia and the haystacks of Normandy, and of Mont St. Victoire are icons of landscape artists worldwide.

Conception in art involves the proper place and season and has its own labors of delivery. A great painting, born in time, transcends time, and, if the canvas truly reflects the painter's intentions, lives forever. So do we.

.Upcoming Events

- October 5th-7th – Fall Into Art Show – Hendersonville High School, Juried Show of 40 Regional Artists
- October 13th – Benefit Show and Auction, New Gallatin Public Library
- November 30th-December 2, Twelfth Annual Fine Art in Brentwood Show and Sale, Brentwood Academy