

# The Artist's Almanac

September 2005

*The day becomes more solemn and serene  
When noon is past – there is a harmony  
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,  
Which through the summer is not heard or seen,  
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!*

Shelley

These are the days we will remember in the dark afternoons of December, inching our way home to the beat of windshield wipers.

This is the best of summer, light without humidity. Pears and figs ripen to sweetness and the opaque blooms of dahlias morph into translucent jewels. Morning dews and mists prelude glorious sunlit days - days favored by golfers, travelers and artists. Roses, which in spring vied for our notice with their profligate abundance, now lift their award-winning specimens up to us on strong single stems. They have saved their best for now.

So has our sun. All white heat in summer, the overhead sun washes out color. Often shrouded in winter, in spring, sol is fickle, dodging between clouds and finding color isolated in flowers and shrubs. Now he comes at a rakish angle to flood the harmony of warm colors which nature wears. Autumn begins this month.

Autumn is the generous, the reliable, season. Its noble light invites the artist to explore the splendor of the world it illuminates. Claude Monet is reputed to have put away his paintbox when clouds obscured the sun, and Renoir did not paint winter landscapes. Any light makes interesting any surface, glorifying the meanest bucket, barn, or brick wall.

Yet even in autumn light changes and changes fast. How often has it happened to you? You are driving along the highway, and there it is – cattle in a field, distant hills, suffused with warm oblique light, defining shadows, multicolored grasses, dramatic clouds- ordinary things in extraordinary light, but no place to pull off and a diesel on your tail. Turner could remember such things in every detail, but you have left your camera home.

Autumn is change. Those distant blue hills that we see as icons of eternity are but waves of the earth, no more permanent than the waves of the sea - the one is sculpted *by* water; the other *of* water. Both of them toss the structures riding them and bury their inhabitants. All changes. Where once we raised horses and corn we now raise houses and cities.



Sideview – Plein air sketch made in late August from Shiloh Churchyard



Time Spent in the Creek – *Bill Puryear, Artist*

The waves of pure autumn light that wash over us are the artist's medium in which he seeks to capture a moment in time. We can never step twice in the same river, but we can stop, bend down and capture a bottle full of the whirling, sunlit water as it flows past us to we know not where.

Bill Puryear