

## Figure and landscape painting – from life and conjured

Painting from life — or, what the eyes see directly before them, translated into paint — take on a different process than my main creations made in the studio without posed life subjects other than sometimes a sketch providing source content.

For figurative painting, the majority of the time relied upon scheduled group sessions with posing professional figure models. This was usually through my expert figurative artist friend, Sebastian Hyde, who hires from the Bay Area Figure Models Guild, for drawing too. And for drawing we'd attend at schools such as UC Berkeley, which offers inexpensive figure drawing sessions for the public.

Over several years, I would attend those Saturday afternoon poses at Seb's house, lasting 3 hours with breaks of course. Often enough time to paint a fresh and nearly completed figure.

The group was often social among being focused on our work, and we were mutually aware that our paintwork would often veer from underdone to overdone in mere seconds! Trainwrecks on canvases abided, sometimes salvaged in time, and sometimes not.

So there is a fine line with painting from life, of pushing brushstrokes into both a proportionate and expressive balance. Too frequently the painting would be jettisoned, midway or at the end. Many sessions produced practice only as the important result, not product.

I learned that mistakes in painting are essential for progress ; they allow breakthroughs and discoveries!

The figures that seemed good enough to save, pile up in stacks. Flawed yet possibly worthy. Some get painted over, while others are touched up just a good amount before potentially being ruined.

The goal is to make it look fresh.

On the following linked webpage of figure paintings, the ones I'm showing

here are a combination of favourites from the 3 hour afternoon sessions — flawed yet possibly "good enough to exist" — and the other type of figurative painting, labored over in my studio after the pose, sometimes with the use of drawings as a tool for aiding proportions. You can see where likenesses and creating an environment took precedence over three hour sessions from life.  
<http://dean-gustafson.com/figures.html>

## Landscapes

Like figures, there's topography to it. Changing light angles add a challenge! As the Earth turns, so does the sunlight, requiring a capture of a light and shadow, and stick to it — or the lighting looks awkward.

I didn't go out *plein aire* painting enough, but loved when I did! Even if the end product was not worth saving at times.

In-studio landscapes were more my method. Inventing light sources and colour layers, with imaginative details.

You can see the difference between the less refined on-site painting and the worked layers of colours in the studio, by perusing my website gallery, particularly this page :

<http://dean-gustafson.com/landscapes.html>

I love both approaches, with each process strengthening the other.

Dean Gustafson, January 2022