

An art teacher in college described my work as “The Advertising Image.” I’ve always liked that, and believe it does accurately describe my work. I like horizontal images that are simple and bold, very much like a good billboard. A seven-word slogan could easily be added to any of my paintings and you’d have a great billboard or magazine ad.

Judges, too, have had some very intuitive things to say about my work. One described it as “portrait-landscapes.” Again, I agree with that. Typically, I will take a face I like, add a body and costume, and then give it a background that says something about that person. For example, I found a face that looked to me like an archaeologist. I found another image of a real archaeologist with his hand extended holding an artifact. I added his body to my original face, replaced the artifact in his hand with the earth, put an Egyptian scarf around his neck, and placed him in front of the Great Pyramids at sunset. It made a striking image.

In this way, I feel I’m making a bold statement with my work. Sometimes, I will paint a landscape without a figure; but I don’t want it to be just another pretty scene. I want to maintain my boldness. That means finding an unusual angle, unusual juxtapositions, or unusual lighting. That’s not always easy to find in nature. But when I spot such a scene, it grabs my attention and yells, “Paint me!” So I do, and, typically, people really like the results.

This brings me to my present interest in plein air painting. Since I have always worked in a studio, going outside to paint is a bit of a challenge. Most of my friends who plein air paint go for the pretty scenes. But, as I’ve described, I look for the unusual, the dramatic, the bold. I want to find the “advertising image” in nature. That often means going out on a limb – sometimes literally – to find it.

Not long ago, I was on the side of a mountain painting, when a thunderstorm erupted. I had to tie myself to a tree, with an umbrella tied over my painting, to keep from sliding off the mountain into the ravine below. It was nerve-racking, but it yielded two excellent paintings. When I play it safe, I never get those types of results. So I will continue to take chances in order to find that advertising image that is hiding behind every face and every landscape. And, by doing so, hopefully the people who see my work will realize, “Hey, maybe I’m not really looking, because I certainly didn’t see that!” It’s worth the effort ... and ... the second look.

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