

## Interview Pratique des Arts in English

- **1 - What inspires you in landscapes, especially the natural landscape and the countryside?**

Light always inspires me, and through it, the ephemeral and fragile state of permanent transformation.

Countryside landscapes have their own rhythm and sometimes seem to escape the time that governs our existence.

I refer to Monet, who said that light makes things appear, then transforms them and finally makes them disappear.

- **2 - Are there landscapes that attract you more than others (Europe, Flanders, eg.) and why?**

I paint the landscapes of my everyday environment. I first need to build an intimate relationship with the subject to be able to paint with my five senses. I don't paint what my eyes see, I paint what I see with my eyes.

Painting a landscape you see for the first time, is like painting the portrait of a stranger. The painting would lack density and vitality.

This explains why most of my work depicts the Flemish landscape, where I currently live, as well as the Tuscan landscape, where I spend much time.

- **3 - What do you like about painting a landscape in each season?**

Each season has a unique flavor and evokes different memories.

The sensation of renewal is a comfort to me because it gives me the illusion that the trajectory of time is circular, and that renewal and rebirth are unshakeable laws of nature.

It fascinates me how the light of each season can transform and renew the same scene ad infinitum.

When I set out to paint a subject, my first action is to define the temperature of each scene and reproduce it. This is the common thread running through the narrative.

- **4 - Have you a favourite season? Why?**

My favorite seasons are spring and autumn.

These two seasons exalt and sublimate the light, weaving soft shadows between the different forms and lending a beautiful harmony to the whole.

When I compose a work, my main concern is to ensure visual links between the different parts of the composition. This makes for a fluid, seamless reading of the work.

- **5 - What are the difficulties inherent in each season?**

As a plein air painter, the winter and summer seasons can present technical difficulties related to cold or heat. But the least inspiring season for a watercolorist is undeniably summer when zenithal light casts harsh or almost non-existent shadows and envelops forms in a yellowish halo.

- **6 - Are there some motifs that are more difficult to paint than others (trees, water, snow, cow, etc.) and why?**

As a painter, I don't perceive these motifs as empirical entities but as a visual language. In other words, forms with certain properties of color and density. From this point of view, all motifs are equally complex.

My work consists of creating an illusion that evokes the motif. Comparable to metaphor in literary language.

The secret is to never state but indicate, to encourage the viewer to reconstruct the subject oneself. And to make them actors in your story.

- **7 - How do you manage the layout of a landscape painting? How do you choose your spot?**

The process of choosing a subject is an emotional process that you do not control. I would say that it is the subject that chooses you and triggers an impression and a vision in you. And it is this ephemeral vision that will form the epicenter of your painting. This vision will determine the design of your work. And everything else will become peripheral and have no role other than to clarify and exalt this vision. Anything that could compromise that vision must be discarded.

When I paint in plein air, I always have a sense of urgency because I know that my vision is ephemeral and can vanish at any moment.

- **8 - Do you always paint landscapes outside or sometimes in your studio with a photo? Please explain.**

On the one hand, it is difficult to paint outdoors under certain conditions, which necessitates alternating painting outdoors and in the studio. On the other hand, I need direct contact with the subject because that is what triggers the emotion in me that manifests itself in a vision.

I paint not just with my eyes but with my five senses. I need to be an actor in the scene I am painting.

- **9 - What is your favourite landscape's colours harmonies and why? You seem to like muted tones.**

The color palette depends on the temperament of each artist.

As far as I'm concerned, I am reluctant to use colors that are too bright because they tend to alter the tonal values.

I prefer soft, half-tone colors. I am often drawn to scenes with backlighting because it gives me the opportunity to unify the shapes under a veil of light that gives the whole a beautiful harmony and mystery.

- **10 - What is your favourite colours, tools and brands for painting outside? (= your watercolour equipment)**

To practice watercolor outdoors, you need light, practical equipment. Don't try to reproduce the comfort of your studio.

In my case, I use a Plein-air Pro easel with a carbon tripod. I work on a quarter sheet of Arche or Saunders paper, but I also sometimes take notes in a sketchbook. I mainly use Daniel Smith pigments.

Photos of my equipment are attached.

- **11- Why is watercolour your favourite medium for painting landscapes?**

The choice of watercolor is first and foremost a question of temperament. Painting with this medium means painting under continuous pressure. And that suits me. I sometimes compare myself to a pianist playing a partition in which the soul swings between serenity and turmoil.

Watercolor is the only medium that lets you capture the flavor of a landscape in a few brief brushstrokes.

- **12 - Could you explain your spiritual relationship with watercolour?**

For me, impressionist and narrative painting express an ephemeral feeling, a state of transformation and therefore the irreversible passage of time. This concept of the irreversibility of time is embodied by watercolors in a very fascinating way.

Watercolor has its own life cycle. It's a living medium that can be apprehended, but never tamed

- **13 -Why do you like narrative painting? Impressionist painters?**

Narrative and impressionist painting correspond perfectly to my vision of the world and my fascination for the state of perpetual transformation and the irreversibility of time.

When I paint a certain light, I'm really trying to remove that furtive moment from its temporality and try to make it last forever.

Only artists, through the power of their imagination, can defy and take revenge on the passage of time.

- **14 - Your creative process: what are the main steps of creation of a painting? If you have process shots of a piece, please join them and comment each step in a few lines.**

For me, the creative process is necessarily preceded by an emotion that manifests itself in the form of an impression. It is an ephemeral impression that needs to be recorded before it fades away. That is why I never leave without my sketchbook.

I start by recording my first impressions by making sketches that involve assessing the design and establishing values. These sketches form the basis of my work in the studio. The photos will help me to visualize certain details.

This process is effective for me, but it doesn't always work. I have thousands of sketches that never came to fruition and always remain at the stage of intentional sketches.

See some examples are attached.

- **15 - The key gestures to create vibration and space in the painting?**

A painting is built on a subtle interplay of antagonism and harmony.

Antagonism is the backbone of a painting, giving it its strength and dramatic dimension.

Antagonism allows the elements to be defined in relation to each other. Example: to express light, you oppose it with shadow.

Harmony is the common thread that weaves the story together. It confers homogeneity and ensures smooth reading. A painting is a visual language that reads like a text.

Harmony can be expressed in several ways: either by a veil of color that tints all the elements, or by physical links that connect the different elements of the painting, or by a subtle arrangement of complementary colors.

- **16 - What is the purpose of the creative act for you? What are you looking for?**

For me, creating is an act of survival and an act of revolt that gives me the power to change things, to defy time and to sublimate ugliness.

I have two perceptions of the world. One is an empirical vision, while the other sees the world as a juxtaposition of shapes and colors submitted to a continuous game of interpretation.

- **17 - I see that you teach with courses. What do you want to transmit?**

First, I encourage my students to adopt a positive attitude towards watercolor and not being afraid of 'accidents' that may occur. Watercolor never makes mistakes. An error is a human concept. Example: never be afraid to cross the lines

I ask them to get rid of the constraints that students might feel.

In addition to technique, I teach them to develop their own visual language by observing their environment and taking notes.

- **18 - Which advices do you have for our readers for painting outdoor?**

Two points are important when you decide to paint in plein-air:

1. the subject selection

2. planning painting.

If your subject lacks personality and is insufficiently prepared, the result will not live up to your expectations.

We're often drawn to spectacular and picturesque views. My advice is not to give in to this temptation. These subjects dull your imagination.

Also, don't try to reproduce literally everything you see. Don't hesitate to remove elements that might confuse the narrative of your painting, and don't hesitate to add elements that enhance your message.

Don't paint only what your eyes see.

Finally, the key word remains 'simplification'.

- **19 - How do you find your own style, your own voice?**

You don't choose your style freely. It is a process beyond our control. By looking back through the rear-view mirror, you realize how far your own style has come.

Your style is an expression of yourself. I often say that pictorial expression is the noblest part of myself because it is the sincerest. The secret is to learn to speak your own voice, your own visual language. Because every human being is unique.

A painter loses their voice once they begin to conform to the image that the audience reflects back to the painter.

- **20 - How did you discover watercolour and how did you train?**

My story with watercolor started from a young age.

When I was a kid, I saw my older sister Latifa, who was a teacher, prepare educational illustrations for her classes. She used a 'Mickey Mouse palette' and cheap brushes. At a later age, I realized how much that fascinated me, and over the time, I started to understand that this was a personal revelation and a major milestone in my life.

Later, I joined the school of fine arts in Brussels to study architecture. During my studies I became familiar with basic rules of drawing, and I got to know watercolor as my favorite medium for rendering.

With the passing of years, my passion and interest in watercolor intensified. The appearance of the internet, with its broader spread of information, accelerated my **learning and knowledge about the medium.**

**Later, I decided to take part in a series of workshops together with some of the most talented contemporary watercolorists worldwide. This was a turning point in my career as an artist.**

- **21- I need a biography in 5 lines.**

I was born in Tétouan, Morocco, and at the age of 17 I joined the Brussels School of Fine Arts to study architecture. During my studies I became familiar with basic rules of drawing, and I got to know watercolor as my favorite medium for rendering.

With the passing of years, my passion and interest in watercolor intensified. The appearance of the internet, with its broader spread of information, accelerated my learning and knowledge about the medium.

Later, I decided to join the Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Eeklo to study watercolor.

I have taken part in many international exhibitions and competitions.

In 2021, I received the status of 'Artist Signature Member of American Watercolor Society'.

I teach watercolor in Europe, the United States and China.

- **22 - Comment in a few lines these 2 paintings**



Autumn sunset

I did this watercolor in the studio from a quick sketch I made on location.

The light was magical, and I hurried to capture the last rays of the setting sun.

I usually avoid enchanting subjects because they anaesthetize, and they paralyze creativity.

This time, I succumbed to the temptation.

To sublimate this beautiful autumn light, I contrasted it with a very dark foreground. I wanted to guide the viewer towards the golden light, which is my point of interest, by forcing them to cross the penumbra in the foreground.

This painting is built around two axes: antagonism and harmony:

- The antagonism is expressed by the contrast in value and color between the foreground and the background.
- The harmony is expressed by the gold-copper veil that gently envelops all the components of the painting.



Flanders Landscape through seasons

What caught my eye in this scene was the beautiful light of the first days of spring. A light that is nascent, fragile, faltering, effervescent. A light that strips the bodies of their heaviness and invites them to move and dance to celebrate the renewal and the birth of spring. That's the message of my painting. But I'm not sure I've achieved it; the beauty of this scene is so disarming for an artist.