

A DAY IN THE ARTS

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A Grand View: The Life and Paintings of **Albert Bierstadt** Part 2

Some of Bierstadt's most famous works featured one of California's most gorgeous parks, the Yosemite Valley. One of his paintings, *Looking up the Yosemite Valley*, is featured here. (*Looking Up the Yosemite Valley*, c. 1865-67, Oil on canvas, 91.4 x 148.6 cm, The Haggin Museum, Stockton, California). Imagine Bierstadt's struggle as he walked through the valley. What should he paint? How could he express the grandeur of the valley to those who have yet to see it for themselves? How could he fit El Capitan into the picture and still portray the trees and the beautiful foliage in the middle ground? The artist chose to depict El Capitan on the left and Bridalveil Falls on the right of the canvas. Together they contrasted with the horizontal movement of the land and river below. It also allows the eye to wonder between the two landmarks, drawing the viewer into the depths of the painting. The scale of the figures and trees in the foreground indicate the magnificent size of El Capitan, greatly enhancing the majestic scene before the viewer.



REVIEW *Leisure Painter* Magazine

Leisure Painter magazine had been published monthly by The Artists' Publishing Company in the UK for over 40 years. Its target market is new artists and amateur painters, looking for how-

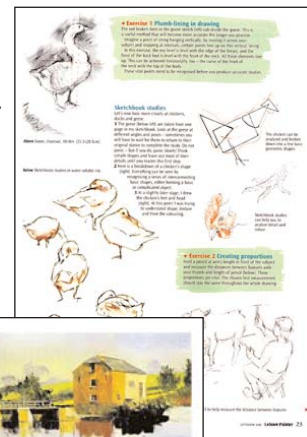


tos and information on honing their skills. The magazine itself is full-color with page after page of detailed instruction. We reviewed the September 2008 issue, which is 68 pages in length. Articles included "Draw and paint farmyard animals", "Experiment with new paper", "How to paint wet-in-wet flowers", "How to master summer greens" and a step-by-step guide to painting oils with knives.

The illustrations are of high quality and the lessons are amply illustrated. Plus, the variety of topics makes it of interest to many people. If you are already an accomplished artist, it may not be for you. But if you are starting out or are interested in learning new techniques, you will no

doubt enjoy this publication. £29.50 per year within the UK and £40.00 per year outside of the UK. 🐾

For more information:
<http://www.painters-online.co.uk>



Page samples from *Leisure Painter*



Another of his great paintings is the 84 square foot painting above titled *A Storm in the Rocky Mountains, Mt. Rosalie* (1866, oil on canvas, 83x142.25", Brooklyn Museum). It came about after his second western exhibition in 1863. The landscape features a marvelous cloud scape within it. The deft use of light and shadow takes the viewer through the busy picture, filled with details of the lush greenery, the craggy mountains and the impending storm.

During his most popular years, Bierstadt's paintings commanded high prices (\$5,000 to \$35,000 each) and were greatly sought by the public. His wealth allowed him to live in high style and to build a palatial mansion in New York. And he was considered to be one of America's finest artists. But times change. Styles change. In the 1880's his popularity waned as new styles of art emerged from Europe. He wasn't inclined to

change his style to mimic these new "fads". And before long, he declared himself bankrupt. He passed away in 1892. Though his work still hangs in many museums, many people seemed to have forgotten about the man and his paintings. His great pictures were no longer needed to show people the west since the big railways had been built and it was easier than ever for people to travel on their own.

During the 1940's people became more interested in the romantic paintings of America. People began to once again appreciate his works. And, in 2008, the US Postal Service brought his work to a whole new generation of art lovers. When you use those stamps to mail your letters, stop to think about the man behind the painting. The adventures he endured. The landscapes he painted. And the country that he showed to thousands of people with his great pictures. 🐾



ART NEWS

The Colossus, below, has usually been attributed to the Spanish artist **Francisco de Goya** (1746-1828). Recently the experts at the Prado museum (Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid) have suggested that the piece is actually the work of one of Goya's assistants, **Asencio Julia**.

The discovery came about when the museum staff analyzed the painting under proper laboratory analysis. It revealed limitations to the painting in the technique, light and color. Also, the physiology of the giant does not match that of the other human figures painted by Goya. There's also the matter of the initials "AJ" which can be found on the painting itself. With these thoughts in mind, the museum will decide how it wants to handle the painting in the future. It has



already been excluded from one Goya exhibit after doubts of its authenticity arisen. (<http://www.museodelprado.es>)

The Saint Louis Art Museum announced the recent acquisition of François-André Vincent's *Arria and Poetus*, above, a neoclassical oil painting on canvas. The Museum had been interested in adding a neoclassical painting to its collection for more than 20 years.

"After a twenty-year search, we are pleased to be able to offer an extraordinary example of French neoclassicism in our collection," said Judith Mann, curator of European Art to 1800. "We couldn't have found a better example in terms of quality and the year in which it was first exhibited; 1785 was an extremely important year in the development of Neoclassicism." The painting depicts the story of the Roman wife Arria visiting her husband, Poetus, who is imprisoned. In the scene, Arria tells Poetus

"The best way to get started is to stop talking and begin doing." —Walt Disney

that the honorable thing is to commit suicide, but when he proves reluctant, she takes a knife and demonstrates for him, handing him the weapon afterwards and saying, "Poetus, it does not hurt." Vincent has focused on the moment just before Arria plunges the knife into her breast. Looking straight at Poetus, Arria gestures to her head, emphasizing that her husband already knows what must be done. 🐼

Art Aerobics

STRETCH YOURSELF

For those of you who want to do more than read about Art, we're introducing our new daily (or almost daily) feature: Art Aerobics. Keep your drawing, painting and clay supplies handy. Each day we will provide you with a new, quick, artistic exercise. Most of these will take only minutes a day to complete. Of course, if it sparks your creative juices, feel free to continue working on your art for as long as you have time to.

Today's assignment: Close your eyes and ask someone to place an object in front of you. Sketch it in 60 seconds or less. Repeat as many times as you wish. 🐼