TEN MINUTE TIP - VALUE STUDY

* **What** is a value study?
* A small, simplified drawing or sketch of what you want to paint. It focuses on the dark and light masses and how they relate to each other.
* Value is the relative lightness or darkness of a color. Contrasting values make an image identifiable and give depth by expressing form.
* Use 3 values: dark, medium, light (can be the white of the paper).
* Pencil, marker, paint (one color)
* This is your game plan
* “The values are the skeleton of the painting on which color and form are added.” *Betty Lou Schlemm, Watercolor Secrets for Painting Light.1996*
* **Why** do a value study?
* To get acquainted with your subject and work out a pleasing composition.
* You figure out in advance the shapes of dark, medium, light with their position, size, and relationship to each other.
* The values help establish the background, middle ground and foreground. Light values help the scene recede; darker values bring it forward.
* You link the shapes.
* As the light can change quickly in plein air painting, the value study will continue to be your guide.
* No matter how beautiful the colors… if the painting is weak in values, it won’t work as well as you’d hoped.
* A value study will improve your painting.
* **How** to do a value study?

\*Keep it small. 3” square is fine. That’s why value studies are also called “thumbnail sketches.”

\*Draw a rough frame; use the same shape as your paper (horizontal, vertical, or square).

\*Start by outlining the major shapes. Don’t try to be careful or correct. Ignore details.

\*Draw quickly, keeping your focus on what strikes you. This is your interpretation of what you see and like.

\*Feel free to jot some notes about how the scene makes you feel or why you like it, and the direction of the sun.

\*Pay attention to the negative shapes- they are also masses and they help you get the proportions right.

\*Consider emphasizing an area by placing the darkest darks and lightest lights next to each other.

* Some **tips**
* Get the general idea in quickly. Are you pleased with it? If not, do another. Repeat.
* You can edit the scene. Take out extraneous objects or add something for interest.
* You are the artist and you have creative license!
* Dark and light masses should not be equal in size; one should be dominant.
* Don’t forget the shadows. They can provide a way for the eye to travel through the painting and can link shapes of the same value.
* Within a value area there can be a variety of colors, just keep them in the same value range.
* Place a sheet of acetate under your work so it won’t bleed onto the next page.
* Remember to go back and refer to your value study as you paint.
* Use a value scale card or a piece of red acetate to check that your values work.
* Color gets the credit; value does the work.