

Plein Air Painting

October 24-27, 2018
with Michael Chesley Johnson



CLASS INFORMATION AND SYLLABUS

Artists have flocked to Grand Canyon for over a century. In such an expansive and complex landscape, recording one's impressions can be daunting, as well as immensely rewarding. The principal aim of this class is to provide participants with strategies and experience to effectively paint the landscape on-location at the beautiful Grand Canyon!

Nationally-known artist, Michael Chesley Johnson, will start with basic principles, and then demonstrate his method for "capturing the moment" quickly and efficiently but without sacrificing mood and magic. Participants will learn how—by focusing on just value & color temperature in an initial "best guess"—one can get started quickly, leaving plenty of time for making adjustments at a more leisurely pace.

Participants will have the opportunity to practice new skills, with Michael going from easel to easel offering plenty of personal help. Each day will offer at least one demo plus critiques of student work.

SCHEDULE

At this time of year, sunrise is late (around 6:45 a.m. MST) and sunset, early (around 5:30 a.m. MST.) This will give participants the opportunity to paint Grand Canyon's spectacular sunsets in an *optional* evening painting session. Average temperatures at this time of year on the South Rim range from a morning low of 34 degrees to a daytime high of 62. However, be prepared for warmer or cooler and dress in layers regardless.

DAY 1

Meet at the Community Building ([Google Map](#)) at 9 a.m. MST for introductions to the class topics and materials followed by Plein Air painting. Wrap up at 4 p.m.

DAYS 2-4

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. each day. Critiques and lecture in the Community Building, followed by travel to an assortment of painting locations including Yaki Point, Mohave Point and Grandview. One day we will have an optional sunset painting activity at one of my favorite spots. Critiques on last day at the end.

Should the weather be inclement, we will paint inside the Community Building.

SUPPLY LIST

Michael works in two mediums: oil and pastel. What follows is a list of what he recommends for these. If you've not used a split-primary oil palette before, or aren't familiar with using Ampersand Gessoboard or hog bristle flat brushes, or any of the other materials, bring whatever you're comfortable with. (Some people are used to canvas and not Gessobord; some are used to Canson paper and not sanded paper.)

If you are painting in some other medium, please bring what you normally bring, but also the items marked "Miscellaneous" below. Special Note for Acrylic Painters: Acrylics dry fast outdoors. Make sure you are prepared to deal with fast-drying conditions. Consider using a Sta-Wet Palette, retarder and mister. Or, try the new, slower-drying acrylics such as Golden Open or Atelier Interactive.

For Oil Painters

- **Paints:** Split-Primary Palette: Cadmium Yellow Light, Cadmium Yellow Deep, Cadmium Red Light, Permanent Alizarin Crimson, Ultramarine Blue, Phthalo Green (or Viridian), Titanium-Zinc White, Chromatic Black. Earth Colors: Yellow Ochre, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber. (I use Gamblin for all my oil painting materials)

- **Thinner:** Gamsol (from Gamblin.)
Please, no turpentine if we are in the studio.
- **Medium:** Galkyd Gel (dries faster) or Solvent-Free Gel (dries more slowly)—but I don't use it very often, so it is optional. (All from Gamblin.)
- **Panels:** Ampersand Gessobord (9x12s—plan on 2 panels a day—and also a few 5x7s). Avoid the cheap cotton canvas-covered cardboard panels. I make my own panels: Untempered hardboard with one coat of Gamblin PVA followed by two coats of acrylic gesso. I like my panels because they are more absorbent than Gessobord.
- **Brushes:** Hog Bristle Flats (#10, #8, #4)
- **Painting Knife:** I like a small, trowel-shaped one about an inch long
- **Also:** Wet panel carrier, container for Gamsol

For Pastel Painters

- **Pastels:** A full set of hard pastels, such as Polychromos or NuPastel; plus a good selection of softer pastels. You may also want to consider the "Michael Chesley Johnson Plein Air Set" of 50 pastels from Pastels Girault. This may be ordered from the US distributor, Pastel Etc.: Michele Aplin, michele@giraultpastels.com or 310-640-8388.
- **Paper:** UArt Sanded Pastel Paper (plan on 2 9x12 sheets per day and also a few 5x7 pieces.) I like the 400-grit. ArtSpectrum Colourfix will also work for liquid washes, but it is much coarser.
- **Backboard** to tape paper to
- **Solvent:** either rubbing alcohol or Gamsol
- **Old bristle brush** (cheap 1" trim brush is fine)
- **Also:** Container for solvent, masking tape

Miscellaneous

- **Outdoor easel:** For oil, I use the "Daytripper" easel from Prolific Painter; for pastel, the Heilman "backpacker" box with easel; plus a tripod for each. An old standby is the trusty French Easel.

Whatever you use, it should be portable and lightweight and above all stable.

- **Umbrella:** Not necessary, but helpful in intense sunlight.
- **Stool:** Not necessary, but if you must sit to paint, I strongly suggest a camp stool or collapsible chair, since not all locations have picnic tables.
- **Paper towels** and **small garbage bags**
- **Small Sketchbook** and **6B drawing pencil** for making quick thumbnail sketches.
- **ViewCatcher**, gray scale and pocket color wheel
- **Photos to work from.** **In the event of inclement weather we will work in the studio from photos.**
- **"Baby Wipes"** for cleaning fingers.
- Appropriate **clothing and footwear**, including hat, sunblock and water bottle
- **Lunch.** Bring a bag lunch, because if we're out in the field, we may not have dining facilities or a deli nearby.

Keep in mind that this is a plein air workshop!
What this means is:

- **Everything should be portable.** You should be able to carry everything in ONE trip.
- **Think ahead to what you might need in the field**, such as drinking water, snacks, baby wipes for your hands, sun hat, sunblock, etc. But remember -- you still have to carry whatever you bring in ONE trip. (Most likely, we'll be walking very little distance from the car, but you never know!)
- **Restrooms may not be immediately available.** The nature of plein air requires a certain amount of flexibility on the part of both instructor and student, and although we will try to find locations that have restrooms, you may have to use the facilities the Great Outdoors provides.
- **Be flexible!** Some locations may be better at certain times than others depending on weather and time of day. Be prepared to carpool, as some locations may not have parking for everyone.

ABOUT YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Michael Chesley Johnson paints primarily outdoors in pastel or oil, choosing locations from the American Southwest, Downeast Maine and the Canadian Maritimes. He has been invited repeatedly to national plein air events such as the Grand Canyon National Park Celebration of Art.

Michael was awarded Master Pastellist status by Pastel Artists Canada in 2008, and he is a Signature Member of the American Impressionist Society, the Pastel Society of America and the Pastel Society of New Mexico. His paintings have appeared in many magazines and are in both corporate and private collections. He was featured in *The Artist's Magazine* in September 2013.

Michael is a nationally-known teacher, giving workshops across the U.S. as well as seasonally in Maine and the Southwest. A Contributing Editor for *The Artist's Magazine* and frequent writer for *Pastel Journal*, he is the author of several books, including *Outdoor Study to Studio: Take Your Plein Air Paintings to the Next Level* and *Backpacker Painting: Outdoors with Oil & Pastel*. He has many videos available, as well, at NorthLightShop.com.

Michael maintains a summer studio on Campobello Island, New Brunswick (Canada), and a winter studio in New Mexico.

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

The following have lots of information plus demonstrations.

Backpacker Painting: Outdoors with Oil & Pastel by Michael Chesley Johnson

Outdoor Study to Studio: Take Your Plein Air Paintings to the Next Level by Michael Chesley Johnson

Through a Painter's Brush: The American Southwest by Michael Chesley Johnson

The "Bibles" of Outdoor Painting:

Guide to Landscape Painting by John F. Carlson

Composition of Outdoor Painting by Edgar Payne