

MARY'S TRAVEL JOURNAL
PLEIN AIR PAINTING
SUMMER 2011



TRIP 1: DELAWARE WATER GAP

Thursday May 26th

Today is our first trip for Plein Air Painting. I don't really know anyone in the class which I was surprised about. Maybe they are all younger than me, who knows, but it sounds like taking this class was a great idea. I already love the idea of spending my Thursdays out in nature painting. We are at the Delaware Water Gap. It was not too far of a drive from Lehigh. The hike was a little harder than I expected though, which leads me to my first lesson to survive the class.

Lesson Number 1: Don't run 6 miles on Thursday mornings, in fact do not run at all on Thursdays or Wednesday nights to prevent being tired for our hikes!

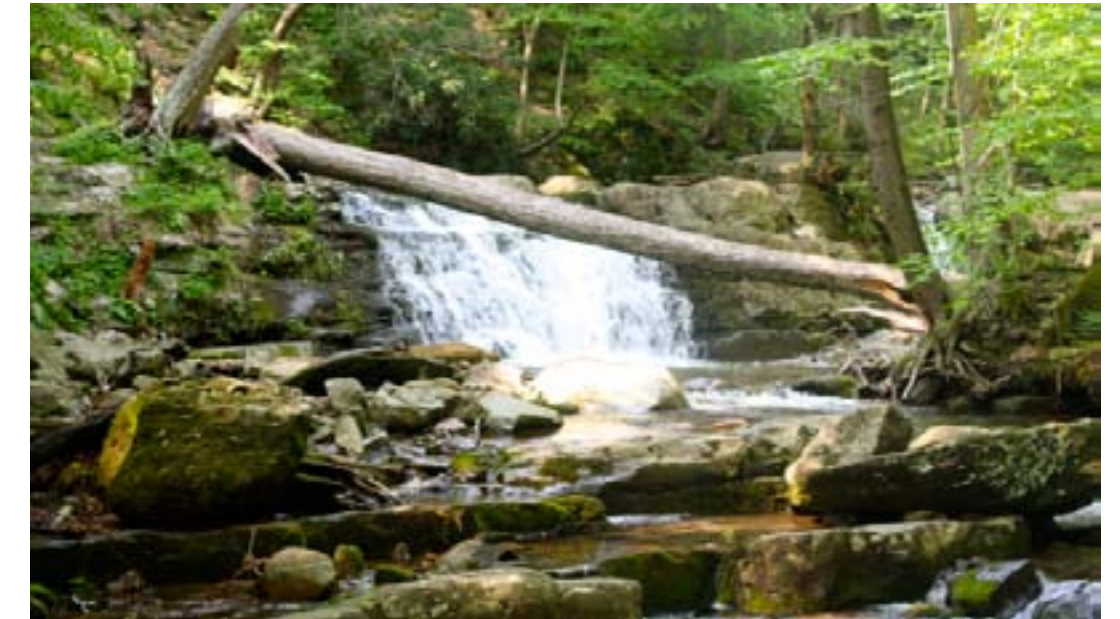
Once we got to the top I set out on the rocks in the sun, ready for a severe sun burn but telling myself I would just tan...yeah right. My spot looked out towards the river. It seemed like a good spot for a first attempt at something artistic besides building a model out of chipboard. Our medium for today is charcoal which I have not used in forever. I immediately took my shoes off in true Mary form and got to work.

Lesson Number 2: If you take your shoes off, spiders will crawl in them (but shoes are a great spot to store paintbrushes and supplies)

I think my charcoal drawing turned out pretty well. It had a very Scream like feel to it, I think because I was using my blending sticks a lot. The trees were a little bit of trouble as well as getting value correct. I also included Andi since she was sitting in my view. I sort of wish I could have gotten more of the water in it but that's okay. In terms of composition I believe it did well using the foreground, middle and background but as I said I think the value could have used some more attention.

Cool things seen on this trip:

SNAKES!! I was so excited that we actually saw snakes. We saw 3 I believe, including rat snakes and a rattle snake that was hiding. The rat snakes were pretty big too! I also made friends with a nice little frog. Jason says the person who spots the animals is always the one who is most afraid of seeing them. I'm pretending to be scared of bears so that we can see one. We will see if that theory works out.



TRIP 2: BAKE OVEN KNOB

Thursday June 2nd

We left at 10am today and headed up to Bake Oven Knob. I am driving today. The drive was about 45 minutes and included a lonnnng windy gravel road...good thing I am taking my car in to get washed tomorrow. My dad probably would not like the fact that we were on gravel but thats okay he doesnt have to know. It's a little windy out today but still pretty sunny. I have decided based on last weeks burn/ tan that I will be wearing the same neon pink tank top every week so I don't get any crazy tan lines on my back. It's only 12 and I already ate my sandwich to prevent any random dogs from snatching my lunch since Jason mentioned that has happened before. I turned on my iPod and it immediatley died but I kind of enjoy just being in nature with no other distractions.

Lesson Number 3: If I bring sunglasses, they will break. I just broke my 2nd pair in 2 weeks, not a good record so far!

My back is definitely burnt but I am trying not to acknowledge that because I am still convinced its just going to be a great tan. I can't seem to get definition in my rocks and Jason keeps informing me of that but I keep getting distracted by all the people coming by who are hiking the Appalachian trail. Every now and then the group gets on the topic of what we think of the Architecture Department. I have had some frustrations with it this past year unfortunately. I just don't know if the education I am getting is what I expected from a place like Lehigh and sometimes I thnk I feel guilty about that for my parents sake and angry as well. I have enjoyed it for the most part but I think I am just losing the confidence I initially had because of the arguments or talks I have had with HT this semester. Apparently he does not see engineering as useful for architects which is just total crap. Oh well, I will do perfectly fine in life without being one of his followers/ slaves. Plus I don't want to turn out like him anyway. Now that thats done I am going to work on my rock definition.

So we went to get ice cream at Maggie Moo's after class and when we came out I noticed a dent in the front of my car...I wanted to cry when I saw it but held it together until I got home. This is going to make my dad pretty angry but I really do not know how it happened. Hopefully it does not cost too much to fix...

Lesson Number 4: You don't tan, you burn.



TRIP 3: JACOBSBURG

Thursday June 9nd

Today is miserably HOT AND HUMID. I am literally convinced that I am going to faint, fall into the poison ivy that is all over the place, and then die. And no, that is not dramatic, it is actually how I am feeling right now. My sunburn from last week is still going strong and my backpack rubbed on my back as we walked up and now it itches. I got mud all over my shoes and this has all happened before I even attempt to find somewhere to paint. However, I am still going strong with the pink tank top, but it is pretty shaded today so a sunburn probably won't be too much of an issue.

Andi, Liz and I are sitting overlooking the river. There are currently a bunch of bugs flying all over my face. Wonderful. But I found a good tree to support my back so the bugs are just going to have to deal with me being here. There are also a lot of children wandering through the area I have decided to paint but I am going to pretend that they don't exist. 1. Because they are in my way 2. Because I wish I was 5 years old with no worries but how to climb the tree in the water

So I finally started painting and it sucks. A lot. I have a really bad headache and no more food or gatorade. I got up to explore for a little to get away from my horrible painting. We found a milk snake sleeping right near where we are sitting. It's name is Chocolate. Chocolate the Milk Snake.

Lesson Number 5: Everyone has a bad day painting at some point, today is mine

Even though I had a bad day, Rita's always makes it better!

After the critique I have decided that I do okay with underpainting but I need to work on what I do after. My color mixing was a little off and I need to think more transparently with my layers. But hopefully next week goes better! Plus I am starting to get to know the kids in the class more and I think we have a great mix of people.

Also this week I started volunteering at a cat shelter. So my friends are all making fun of me saying that I am going to become a cat lady. What they don't realize is that I actually am going to be a crazy cat lady and I am totally fine with that.



TRIP 4: RINGING ROCKS

Thursday June 16th

Within ten minutes I had already been attacked by mosquitos. So far the bites are up to 3. All in the same area, and with my mosquito history (I consider myself an expert) I figure there are only more bites to come. My mom says it's because I am so sweet..such a mom thing to say.

The boulder field was interesting and I liked Jackie's theory about why they ring the best. I'm feeling better than last week and I'm glad we will be in the shade again this week. Still in recovery mode from the sunburn but the pink tank top is on and ready to go just in case the sun decides to peak through the trees.

The rock formations are pretty cool but very daunting in terms of recreating them in paint. Last week's painting was dissapointing so I want this week to go well. I have been bragging to all my friends about the class and they are incredibly jealous of my Thursday hike/ paint days. After such a stressful semester its been really nice to have a relaxing and stress free class that allows me to be artistic without the constant worry that someone won't like what I am doing, like in studio.

I decided to work in black and white again this week since that seemed to work better than the limited palette we used last week. However, it did not go as well as planned and my rocks suck. I went on a little adventure to see what everyone else was up to and wandered down a little from where Liz and I set up. Noting striked me too much but I did find a somewhat interesting tree. I decided to move down away from everyone else and see if I could turn the week around a little. I have found that I am pretty good at underpaintings and sort of like the transparent look in my work more so than the full color paintings. I started very simple and tried not to over do it at all. I really liked the end product. Even though there are a few areas I could have elaborated on, I think it worked out for me.

Lesson Number 6: Mary is the underpainting Queen



TRIP 5: GLEN ONOKO

Thursday June 23rd

Today is my last Thursday with Plein Air! I'm excited to go to Jim Thorpe, my roommate's boyfriend is from there and she said all the hike's are gorgeous. The weather does not look too promising though so that is a little worrismatic. Good thing I have my raincoat packed!

The drive was not too bad and we got to go through the tunnel! The sky seemed a lot brighter on the other side. When we first arrived it was raining so we decided to take cover. We ventured over to the opening that turned out to be at the end of a very long, scary looking cave. I was convinced that there were lions, tigers, and bears living inside but I decided (eventually) to walk through it. It seemed to stop raining so we decided to begin the hike to the hidden waterfall. The rocks were slippery and the trail was muddy but we kept going. There were a lot more people on this trip compared to the others even though the weather was not that great. Most people seemed to be hiking up the waterfall which just seemed dangerous given the fact that 2 people had to be rescued earlier in the week. The climb was steep and as Jason says "Hands Free Hiking." My calves were burning and I kept wondering how much further we were going to go. The waterfalls were all gorgeous. A lot of people in the class decided to stick their heads in the 3rd fall but being wet in the muggy weather just was not appealing to me. Looked like they were all having fun though. I decided to walk back down to the first waterfall because it seemed a little more interesting than the 2nd and 3rd. I picked a spot that gave me a good sense of foreground and middle ground since the background was taken up by the wall of rocks and water flowing down them. I avoided doing the water at first and focused on making my rocks seem more rock like. I think I did a little better this time with the color and everything. The water ended up looking like a curtain and I should have made it a little more transparent with some of the rocks showing through. But, it was a good last day of painting!

We hiked down and I missed out on seeing the snake! But that's okay, I survived the class without getting bitten by a snake, falling off a mountain, or getting eaten by a bear. I would say that is pretty successful. We made a trip to Maggie Moo's and discovered that Jason does not know how to eat ice cream out of a cone.

