

# The Art of PLEIN AIR PAINTING

By Cindy Height

Robert Barber



Barber's Morning at the Ritz



Stewart White (below) working on *Plein Air Painter* (left). Stewart was painting Barber while Barber was painting *Morning at the Ritz*.



The resurgence of getting back to nature has been a growing trend in many areas of life internationally. This Renaissance of sorts has also encompassed the art world, in particular the world of painting with going back to basics and painting en plein air.



**E**n plein air is a French expression which means “*in the open air,*” and is particularly used to describe the act of painting in the outside environment rather than indoors (*such as in a studio*).

Artists have long painted outdoors, but in the mid-1800s working in natural light became particularly important to the Barbizon school and Impressionism. The popularity of painting en plein air increased with introduction in the 1870s of paints in tubes (*resembling modern toothpaste tubes*). Previously, each painter made their own paints by grinding and mixing dry pigment powders with linseed oil.

It was during this period that the “*Box Easel*” was invented — typically known as the French Box Easel. It is uncertain who developed it first, but these highly portable easels with telescoping legs and built in paint box and palette made treks into the forest and up the hillsides less onerous. Still made today, they remain a popular choice even for home use since they fold up to the size of a brief case and thus store away quite easily.

French Impressionist painters such as Claude Monet, Camille Pissarro, and Pierre-Auguste Renoir advocated en plein air painting, and much of their work was done outdoors. American Impressionists were also avid painters en plein air. The popularity of outdoor painting remained constant throughout the 20th century and has



A. J. Alpers at work.



Plein Air painting competitors A. J. Alper and Will Williams discuss Williams painting early one morning.



gained popularity in the 21st century with the formation of many artists groups with the use of the Internet as a form of information sharing as well as advertising.

The City of Havre de Grace became the subject of the plein air painting scene last year when Soroptimist International of Havre de Grace hosted the First Havre de Grace Plein Air Painting Competition. Thirteen artists were selected from through-

Two ways an artist might see our waterfront.

Boat Yard — Pastel by Alice Laputka



Sunrise from Lock House — Oil by David Diaz



out the United States by juror Kathryn McMahon, Signature Member of the International Plein Air Painters Association and completed on a three-day paint out.

This year, the Second Annual Havre de Grace Plein Air Painting Competition is guaranteed to be an exciting event with painters being selected by Jacqueline Baldini of Niagara Falls, Ontario Canada. Jacqueline is a painter and master photographer and is the Founder, Director and also a Signature Member of the International Plein Air Painters Association Worldwide. Competitors will be selected by Ms. Baldini from all over the world to paint within the city limits of Havre de Grace August 1st through 4th.

During the competition each artist will paint plein air and submit into the competition two finished and framed paintings done during that time period to be judged by Barbara Perrotti of Ormond Beach, Florida. Barbara is included in numerous prominent collections including the National Infantry Museum, Georgia and Disney World, Fl. She is listed in Who's Who in American Art and is an active member in

the following organizations: International Plein Air Painters Association (*Signature Status, SE Ambassador*), the National Museum of Women in the Arts, American Impressionist Society, Southern Ladies Art Conference, Plein Air Florida (*Signature Status*), she co-founded both East Coast Plein Air and Group of Eight. Ms. Perrotti takes part in various plein air invitationals and competitions.

To open the painting competition exhibition The Second Annual Havre de Grace Plein Air Painting Competition Gala Preview Party will be held on August 4th. Attendees will have the opportunity to be the first to view these local works of art by the select master painters, meet the artists, and purchase the paintings. The exhibit and sale of these paintings will be open to the public from August 5th to 19th. All proceeds from this event benefit scholarships and community service projects. Soroptimist International of Havre de Grace is a non-profit 501c3 organization. For sponsorship opportunities and/or more information on the event, please call **410-939-9342**, email [hdgartshow@hotmail.com](mailto:hdgartshow@hotmail.com) or visit [www.hdgartshow.org](http://www.hdgartshow.org).