

**KATHERINE TAYLOR, ARTIST  
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF ART TRAINING & WORK METHODS**

## **ART TRAINING**

After getting my education degree in 1986, I began to work as a high school English teacher by day in Albuquerque, New Mexico. However, by night I started studying my truer passion, oil painting.

Carol Allison was my first real mentor, and I studied with her on and off for ten years. She was a prodigy trained under the Siegfried Hahn-Howard Wexler School of Drawing and Painting which primarily studied the lost techniques of the Dutch, Flemish and Venetian Schools of Art. Allison also worked with Jacques Maroger who, as director of the Louvre Laboratories of the Louvre Museum in Paris France, spent years experimenting, researching, and chemically analyzing the paintings of Rubens, Vermeer, Titian, Velasquez, and other artists of the Golden Age of painting. Allison's tutelage was my first and most intense training of all my art studies; it was the best training I could have ever received in the classical methods of Old Masters painting techniques.

Throughout the eighties and nineties, I studied with many other great Southwest artists in order to branch out from the classical methods and broaden my spectrum of oil painting knowledge. David Schwindt was probably my second biggest mentor during this time. He studied closely with Wilson Hurley for many years, among others of the Great American Landscape tradition. Another influential master painter with whom I spent some time was Zhang Wen Xin; what he failed to communicate in his poor English, he made up for in amazing demos. I studied with several other painters in the area, too. I was lucky to be living in the Southwest during the 80s because a lot of good artists reside there and they were accessible to me at the time.

From year 2000 and on, I stopped full-time teaching to devote myself almost entirely to oil painting. I took two trips to Italy to study the Masters there. I have also participated in workshops offering a variety of painting styles, like Baroque & Naturalism (Craig Srebnik), California Impressionism /Plein Aire (Kim English, Richard McKinley), Drawing the Figure (Sherrie McGraw), and Russian Impressionism (Cheri Christensen). Regarding the last, I believe that most of the best art today is coming from Russia and China where this contemporary version of French Impressionism is being employed. The looser brushwork and warmer color palette has definitely influenced my style. But so has everything else I've studied.

Nonetheless, I can say without equivocation that the 19<sup>th</sup> C. **Orientalist Art** movement for subject matter and the **Baroque** method (which started in the 17<sup>th</sup> C. with Peter Paul Rubens) for paint application is where my style of painting is securely located at this time. The Baroque style of painting includes these elements:

1. Dramatic selective illumination of figures or objects out of deep shadow (chiaroscuro).
2. Very emotional art with a lot of movement and strong dramatic contrasts between light and dark.
3. Looks for ideal lighting situations and light/dark patterns – capturing the light over the form is EVERYTHING to a Baroque painter.
4. Intent is to describe mass and form using values, color and edges (i.e. softened edges as the form turns away).
5. Intense focal point (which means one must sacrifice parts of the painting for the center of interest).
6. Stresses a painterly style of brushwork (bravura).

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7. Usually paints on an imprimatura (light, transparent wash of burnt sienna over the white gesso) and/or begins with a grisaille underpainting, often done in burnt sienna; often this underpainting is not completely covered over with paint, especially in areas of shadow, where it is subtly revealed.
8. Employs several techniques to achieve brilliancy of color:
  - designs image to have neutral colors in the background so that it showcases high chroma colors at the focal point of the painting.
  - paints on gessoed board panels using a lead-based ground that has the perfect paint adhesion without the absorbency of canvas; with this kind of ground, the paint adheres well but sits *on top* of the ground without absorbing into it, thus retaining its brilliancy of color.
  - uses a Maroger-like medium to mix with paint; this prevents the paint from drying to duller or matte tones; this keeps the darks rich and the colors brilliant; this medium also allows for fast drying so luminous glazing later on is better achieved (velaturas, halation, etc.)

## WORK METHODS

- I prefer painting on boards that I have specially prepared with an oil ground (to retain brilliancy of paint color). I also generally prefer the smooth surface of boards.
- I paint all my still lifes from life, never from a photograph, so I can keep my drawing skills strong. I also paint plein aire as much as possible for the same reason. (A note about drawing: a painting is only as good as the drawing underneath it, whether the drawing is done with charcoal or a brush. If the drawing proportions are off, the rest of the painting will never make up for it, even with good oil painting techniques. Therefore, I spend a lot of time on the drawing stage of my painting, which I usually do with a grisaille in burnt sienna.)
- I usually paint my figurative or cityscape pieces from a photograph, but I have learned the hard way how to prevent the final work from looking too staged and static (i.e., using softened values and edges at the periphery, for instance).
- I do not use just one method to start a painting; some subjects require an underpainting and others don't. But generally I begin most paintings with either a contrasting color underpainting (when I want some high color tension) or a burnt sienna grisaille (so I can get a unity of tone and color throughout the painting).
- I use a Maroger type medium while painting – often Neo Megilp by Gamblin – to keep the colors saturated and the darks richer, more transparent.
- I like using glazing techniques, especially with skin tones and glowing light patterns.
- I often use a palette knife application when I want textured passages; this also helps with keeping the color fully saturated without it getting over-blended or muddy.
- The best painters know when to stop painting! Overworking kills a painting.
- I usually spray with a temporary matte varnish if the painting is still wet, then a Galkyd/ cold wax matte varnish when the painting is super dry. Because of my use of medium during the painting stages, often the final varnish is not needed. I usually avoid a high-gloss varnish but it's good to get at least an even satin surface.