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Phil Lachapelle

Natural Wonder

BY BRANDON DARNELL



PHOTO BY DANTE FONTANA

Camino artist Phil Lachapelle has won numerous awards for his landscape paintings, but his artistic passion developed in a roundabout style.

His entrance into the art world occurred when studying in Los Angeles in the '60s. "I actually wanted to be an automobile designer," he says. "I attended school for seven semesters with that idea, but in the late '60s, there was a recession and they weren't hiring, so I had to make a career change." Lachapelle went into commercial television and retired in 2000; it

was then that he really got back into his chosen art form – painting. “I started in high school, maybe younger, drawing pictures of cars,” he says. “But in 2000, I went into art full-time.”

Lachapelle breaks his art – which he describes as realistic impressionist – down into three series: Italian, Gold Country and miscellaneous works. The Italian series features landscape works of northern and central Italy. “I will say right now, I enjoy the Italian scenes, but I want to break that down because I enjoy doing water,” he says. “Secondly, I do well with skies. Many of my Italian paintings have both of those features.”

One of the artists Lachapelle points to as his inspiration is Camino artist Anita Wolff, an internationally known artist that has taught several classes he has attended. Lachapelle says plein-air artist Calvin Liang and Diamond Springs artist Vicki Catapano are also motivating forces for him.

But his greatest impetus comes from nature. “I love the feeling that I get when doing landscapes, because nature has so many colors. Whether it’s water or trees, I love to do textures.” One example of texture that he enjoys painting is the side of an old barn or a rock. Trees are also of particular interest to him and are the subject of one of his recent works, *Trees Incorporated*, which he describes as a very detailed work of trees and leaves. “What nature provides to you as you look at it is what interests me,” he says.

His Gold Country series features landscapes and points of interest around his hometown of Camino. “I really like to do detail of nature – trees, water, clouds and those sorts of things,” he says. But he also occasionally branches out into other media, including pen-and-ink works.

Though he doesn’t regularly show in galleries, Lachapelle belongs to the Placerville Arts Association, the El Dorado Hills Arts Association, the Folsom Arts Association, and the Sacramento Fine Arts Association. His work can be seen at shows put on by those organizations, and just recently he showed at the Placerville Arts Association’s Studio Tour.

“I’ve won awards at the Mother Lode Art Show, which is a national show that takes place in Placerville, and I’ve also won awards at the Magnum Opus Show (in Sacramento),” he shares. Awards, however, can be finicky. Lachapelle recalls submitting a work to one show, only to have the juror who selected works for the show reject it. He submitted the same piece to another show and it was not only selected, but won an award, too.

For more information visit lachapellefineart.com.