



## Southern California Artists Painting for the Environment

P.O. Box 30932 Santa Barbara, CA 93130 805/962-5588

### Peggi Kroll-Roberts Workshop

#### *"The Figure In A Garden Setting"*

by Beth Westen

I've never hosted a painting workshop before, and I have to admit I was a bit nervous. So, I tried to think of everything and plan for all the contingencies. I had hired all the models and bought refreshments. Peggi Kroll-Roberts arrived to stay at my home the night before the 3-day workshop was to begin, and I had everything ready.

The next day, just one hour before the workshop was to begin, the model's boyfriend called. "I've got bad news for you," he said, and went on to report that our model had come down with a terrible migraine, and had had to be hospitalized. We had no model for the first day of our workshop! Panic set in.

I quickly started calling all the models I knew, and amazingly, one was free and able to come over immediately for the morning session. Peggi's three-day workshop began on time, as if there had never been a problem. And while we worked, my husband managed to find a young model who sat for us in the afternoon.

We spent the first day in the garden with our model against a background of flowers, and then on a bridge, over the creek. We spent our second day at a nearby swimming pool, to work on the effects of reflected light and water, and then returned for the third day to the garden setting.

Peggi was really wonderful. She started with a short demonstration of her approach and techniques. Then she had us all begin with a quick value study—something we all know we should do, but often skip. It was very helpful. Some workshop teachers just paint the whole time and hope you'll learn by observation. Peggi's approach is to work directly with each participant, watching the painter work, making specific suggestions, and teaching the entire time.

It is sometimes hard to force oneself to go back to basics, but it definitely makes a



*Peggi Kroll-Roberts, oil*

difference. Color is so seductive that it can distract from the foundation of a painting. A value study forces you to simplify, to organize shape, to ignore detail, and to get to the essence of the composition. We had to paint fast, using a small panel format. By using a small hand mirror to check the image in reverse, we were able to see mistakes and correct them at an early stage. After the value study we did the same pose again in color. Peggi pushed us to work quickly and simply, as she only gave us twenty minutes to do a small complete painting. "It's all about mileage," Peggi reminded us. We worked very hard and did many small canvases each day. The improvement was evident across the board.

Peggi deliberately pushed us to work on short studies, so that we would have to capture images in the rapidly-changing light. For someone like me, who loves the detail, it was a great and satisfying challenge to remain loose. I did many studies and often painted over them the next day with more "miles" of brushstrokes. Practice, practice, practice. At the end of the day, we felt those miles!

Our first two days were in bright, beautiful sun. By the third day, the overcast weather set in, so that we no longer had rapidly changing light. The timing was perfect, because the steadier light conditions allowed us to take the lessons of the first few days and apply them at a bit more leisurely pace. We spent more time on each painting. All of us felt the workshop was excellent. Participants commented that Peggi was thoughtful, encouraging, enlightening, and inspiring. We are anxious to get to work incorporating the lessons we learned into future paintings.

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