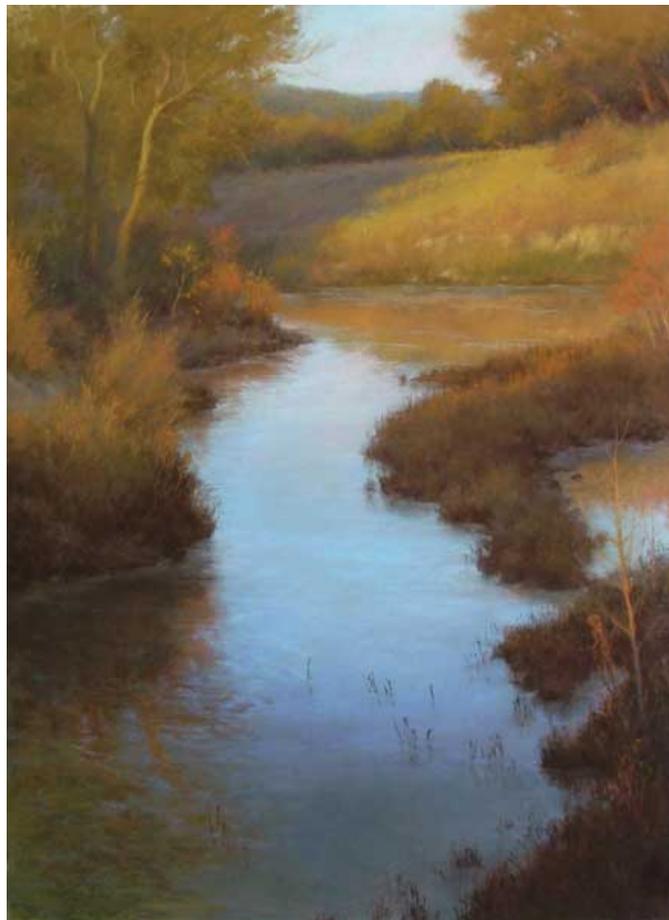


American Artist Cover Competition Winners Announced



In the Stillness...

by Denise LaRue Mahlke, 2008, pastel,
24 x 18. Courtesy InSight Gallery,
Fredericksburg, Texas.

Denise LaRue Mahlke

According to Texas landscape artist Denise LaRue Mahlke, design is key to a painting's success. Mahlke says she enjoys making many thumbnail sketches and value studies in the process of planning, drawing, and experimenting with different compositions for her pastel paintings. Whether working outdoors or in her studio, she always makes time for this preliminary step. In her studio she might also work from photographs, but she says these are secondary to her sketches and any other reference material she has gathered outdoors.

"My inspiration for *In the Stillness...* was the warm golden glow of late afternoon light on the grasses and trees and the contrasting cool tones of sky reflecting in the water," Mahlke says. Working from photos in her studio, she used a soft-leaded pencil to make several thumbnail sketches of the scene in various formats and values before deciding on her design.

Mahlke likes to experiment, using different brands of pastel papers and making her own surfaces, but lately she has been using UART sanded pastel paper, preferring the 500-grit variety. For larger paintings, she has her paper mounted to Gatorfoam board. She starts a painting by indicating the large shapes with a neutral Nupastel stick or charcoal and blocking in her middle- and dark-value shapes with 1-to-½-inch pieces of Nupastels and Rembrandts in warm and cool colors. She then uses a wash of Gamsol odorless mineral spirits to dissolve the pastel and establish the underpainting. When this is dry, she re-establishes the darks and mid-darks with the same pastels and then starts working with other brands, including Art Spectrum, Unison, Schmincke, Sennelier, and Terry Ludwig. She works on all areas simultaneously to develop the painting as a whole before focusing on details, using the sides of her pastel sticks as opposed to the tips.

For more information, visit www.dlaruemahlke.com, or e-mail dlaruem@yahoo.com.

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