

The Accidental Tourist

by Lucien Smith

In 1841, American painter John Rand revolutionized painting through the conception of premixed pigments in tin tubes. This became a major tool in the advance of early impressionists who found a shared interest in traveling to the countryside to practice open air painting: a way of escaping the dominant, traditional French painting standards of the early 19th century.

Developments such as this have aided painting throughout history into the digital age. Today we, like the impressionists, practice a form of escapism using our devices to remove ourselves from the occasional banality of daily life.

This powerful tool has generated a debate on its resultant effects on society. As a painter I question what effect this technology would have had on early impressionism; moreover, I question the immediate effects on painting today. By doing so I arrived at photography in relation to painting. In my own work I constantly struggle with the redundancy of merely recreating an image. I have since practiced distance from the source image and allow the painting to become a departure.

Soon I began examining the relationship we have with photography and the image, such as photographs we see in a gallery and images we see on the web. When we look at an image context allow us to identify what one may see as art or of value. With imagery becoming abundantly present in our day to day those classifications are becoming less identifiable.

I seek to understand the relationship between photograph and image through a painting perspective. The notion of the 'instant' form rivaling the traditionally mastered and an investigation into source imagery. Navigating through social media as a resource I notice the relationship between images I bookmarked. A subconscious narrative begins to form, each image like a chapter in a book, and like any book is incomplete until the last chapter is written.

This search for imagery allows me to disembark from the confines of my studio as the Impressionists once would, and embrace the abundant source of imagery accumulated through the gaze of others. Nevertheless, this new freedom has raised attention to the positive and negative effects of this *Accidental Tourism*. I cannot help but notice the

fine line between exploring this ocean of images and actively abusing it; the inclination to become dependent on such a tool may disrupt one's personal narrative.

A day is made up of the accumulation of events we experience, and this escape can prevent this natural experience forthcoming. Or Perhaps these images are in fact a key distraction, incessantly encouraging us to seek out more than just our immediate surroundings.