



USA

ELIZABETH SANDIA PAINTS THIN LAYERS OF TRANSPARENT OILS, A REVIVAL OF THE TERM 'AMERICAN LUMINISM' FROM MID 20TH CENTURY

OIL

PASTEL

# Choosing between Oils and Pastels



*Night Vision, pastel, 32 x 40" (80 x 101cm)*

*Late Light, diptych, oil, 20 x 24" (50 x 60cm)*



Missing color in my creative life, I was drawn back to painting while designing custom homes and renovations in Key West, Florida in the early 90s. Unfortunately my busy practice get me from actually doing much on a regular basis. Frustrated, then debilitated from an allergic reaction to mould, I decided to relocate Santa Fe, New Mexico where it is sunny, dry, very picturesque, and home to more than 2000 artists and 200 galleries. After recovering from the mould I settled in and begin my search for a teacher.

My first attempt at painting back in Key West were with watercolour. In Santa Fe my plan was to paint in oil. I met up with a painting instructor whose work I admired as a tourist. In his class, however, I got distracted with pastels until about three years ago. I was looking for an alternative means of expression and decided to go back to oils, which I had used as a teenager.

I wanted to be a fine artist when I was 18, but I didn't know any artists then, or how one made a living as a painter. Now 40 plus years later I'm in the perfect place focusing on this other medium.

Through lots of experimentation and trying my best to apply oils in the traditional thick and juicy way, I have gone off on a very personal path. I'm not good at putting thick paint on a surface.



*Icy Creek and Willow, pastel, 20 x 24" (50 x 60cm)*

## about my work

I primarily paint landscapes in fairly large formats. My favourite season is fall when trees are at the height of color and can be caught in an early snow. My luminous effect lends itself to capturing water beautifully and the transparency reflects my transparent nature.

I am unabashedly having fun with big brushes and energetic application of paint. I am on a path to eventual abstraction of the landscape and see hints of a style not too unlike that of forest Moses. (I was unaware of this older Santa Fe painter until an artist friend saw one of my multi-coloured underpaintings and mentioned his name).

I experiment with very bright, unorthodox use of color occasionally which is extremely pleasing. My philosophy is why not push color to express emotion, delight the eye, be daring. Some artists are using digitally-altered images to push a new color direction. Right now I rely on my imagination to do what I am technologically unable to. They are purely for my enjoyment and to experience my forum of breaking some old plein air "rules".



Developing *The Old Barns*, oil, 18 x 22" (46 x 56cm)



*Early Snow*, 32 x 40" ( 80 x 101cm)

I can't seem to judge how much paint is enough – not too much or too little, the best mixes, correcting an area, or getting anything done with just want perfect stroke.

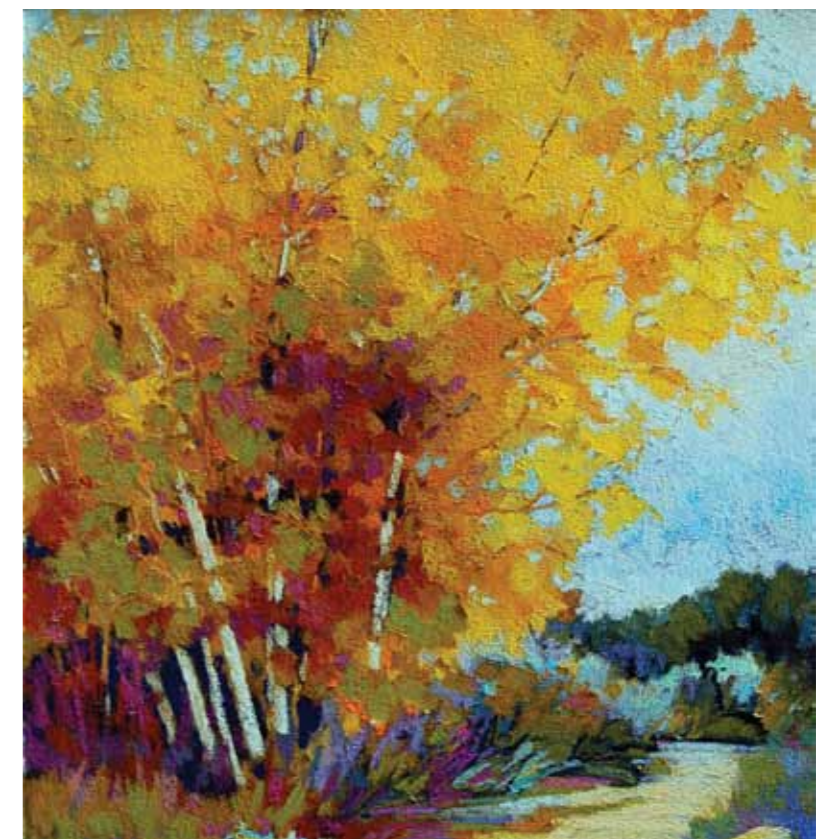
My natural expression is with transparently applied paint. This came about because I would begin each painting with an exuberant thin lay-in and then fall in love with how this looked. I am much more drawn to the looseness, the fresh vibrant brushstrokes, and would dread continuing with thicker paint and deliberate, controlled strokes. It reminded me of my years of En Plein Air with painting pastels. Bringing back to my studio loose, free, energetic sketches then make them more finished but losing that initial bold impact that seems truer to my spirit.

I'm even drawn to other artists' early stages of the painting rather than where they ended up.

I also prefer working in the series of transparent layers – paint a session, stop, step away, ponder, then continue the next day or so. All has dried and I can brush on another layer feeling →



*Grazing*, oil on canvas, 24 x 30" (60 x 76cm)



*Indian Summer*, pastel, 15 x 10" (39 x 25cm)

# my art in the making The Falls graphite & pastel on paper, 11 x 8½" (28 x 21cm)

Sketch of "The Falls"



## PROCESS AND TECHNIQUE

My series of steps to completing the painting begins with deciding which gallery the painting will go to and therefore the region, subject, colours and size.

I pour over dozens of photos printed sketches that I can reinterpret or recrop. Lately I do 3 value thumbnails which are used as my roadmap.

I select stretched gallery wrapped linen, canvas or gatorboard, coat with acrylic or oil-based gesso – depending on my time schedule. I usually give the thoroughly dried surface is generally a thinly applied coat of Yellow or Yellow-Orange that gives it warmth, a luminous glow that shows throughout the entire layering process.

When that initial layer is dry, I lay in the basic shapes with a loose, rough indication of charcoal and wipe most of that off with a dry, soft brush or clean rag so only a faint ghost image remains.

Sticking to a usual procedure, I paint the main, darkest or dominant shape first keeping edges varied and interesting.

All of each day's work is kept thin. And it dries by the time I paint again. I'm not good at a la prima. I like to mull and live with a painting. I have no set formula so even though I start the same way, each painting develops and evolves uniquely.

I work with natural light only. My painting day ends by sundown since I live and work in the same place, I get to look at a painting from various vantage points, in bright light and night time like in a collector's home. If a painting "reads" well in all light conditions and from far away, I know I have a good working composition and a successful value range.

## Art Materials Used

### Support

Stretched linen on heavy, braced 2" deep bars

### Brushes

14" & 16" bristle filbert

### Palette

Glass 26 x 28" (66 x 71cm) taped to gatorboard painted white & mounted to an adjustable height rolling computer stand

## STAGE 4

This session I go back to water areas with blue, then go to rocks and add very thin glaze of grey'd blue to keep the eye moving. Edges of falling water are softened with a dry brush treatment. lots more oil bar lines are added.

## STAGES 5 & 6

Careful additions, softening. All work in the upper portion was left in that sketchy stage (stage 2) so not to get cluttered with details that would pull attention to itself. The painting from start to finish has complimentary upward sweeps to the forceful Spilling down of the waterfall. (Actual scale of falls from top to bottom is 40 feet).



## STAGE 1

thin underpainting of Indian Yellow, Transparent Orange, Quin, Burnt Orange using a very sketchy indication of rocks & falls (left white, untouched) in charcoal as my guide.



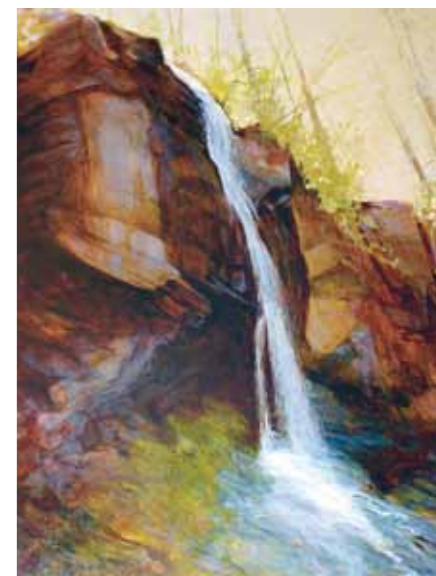
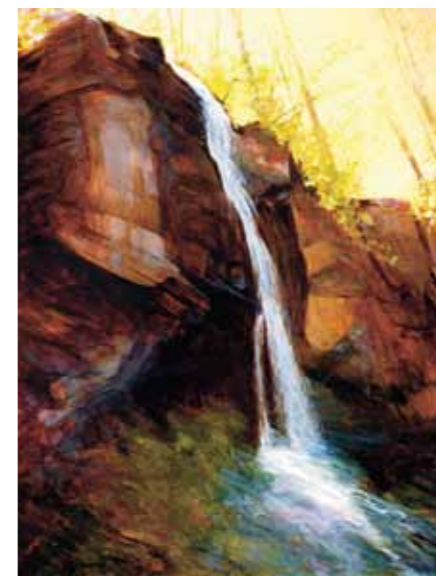
## STAGE 2

Much of the painting is resolved at this early point. Shadows, highlights, rock edges, sky & sparse leaf indications. Faint tree trunks and limbs. Bottom portion of the painting is sloping, wet mossy. More warm browns for strength in the cliffs, blues where some sky might reflect, and lovely yellow greens and even opaque violet is touched in at top left, down to lower left and around water and up to the right of the falls.



## STAGE 3

Falls' water is given a thin wash of violet grey where it is in shadow. I also add a bit of black oil bar to emphasize rock crevices. Areas to the right of falls are toned down so they do not compete for attention.



## Artists' Quality Transparent Oils:

Yellow Iron Oxide  
Indian Yellow  
Orange  
Quin Burnt Orange  
Brown Oxide  
Sap Green  
Green Gold  
Alizarin Crimson

Quin Magenta  
Cobalt Blue

## Non-transparent

Violet Grey  
Radiant Violet





*Shadow Dance I*, pastel, 12 x 24" (30 x 60cm)



→ about pulling up my previous day's work.  
 I not only use plenty of medium (currently Liquin by Winsor and Newton) but have separate out all my tubes of transparent and semi transparent pigments and note also which are single pigment or mixes. Both the inherent and non obliterating nature of transparent colours and the single pigment ones guarantee fresh, clean, unsullied layering.

I am not concerned with brushstrokes. I just let go of control (an old need) and enjoy the colour, the unfolding of my large, joyful landscapes.

Since I am hardwired for info gathering, I have compiled a sheet listing cool colours and warm (all transparent) and indicated which are mixes, which are single pigment (a number of artist friends were not

*Canyon Sunlight*, pastel, 18 x 14" (46 x 36cm)

aware that most tubes indicate with a symbol whether transparent and list the pigment numbers.

Switching to a medium that requires mixing rather than choosing, I did extensive amount of actual mixing exercises similar to the ones suggested by Richard Schmidt. I have collected to 2 dozen separate palettes used by contemporary artists like Elio Camcho, Tony Williams (UK), Nicholas Verrall (UK), Tim Lawson, Malcolm Liepkié. Even found the palette list used by Van Gogh, Emil Carlson and Andre Derain. I tried a number of palettes shown in Nita Leland's book 'Confident Colour'. But I've had to custom choose a workable palette for myself using just transparent colours including Transparent White, Chromatic Black, Quinacrodones, Ultramarine Blue, Cobalt, Phthalos, Indian Yellow.

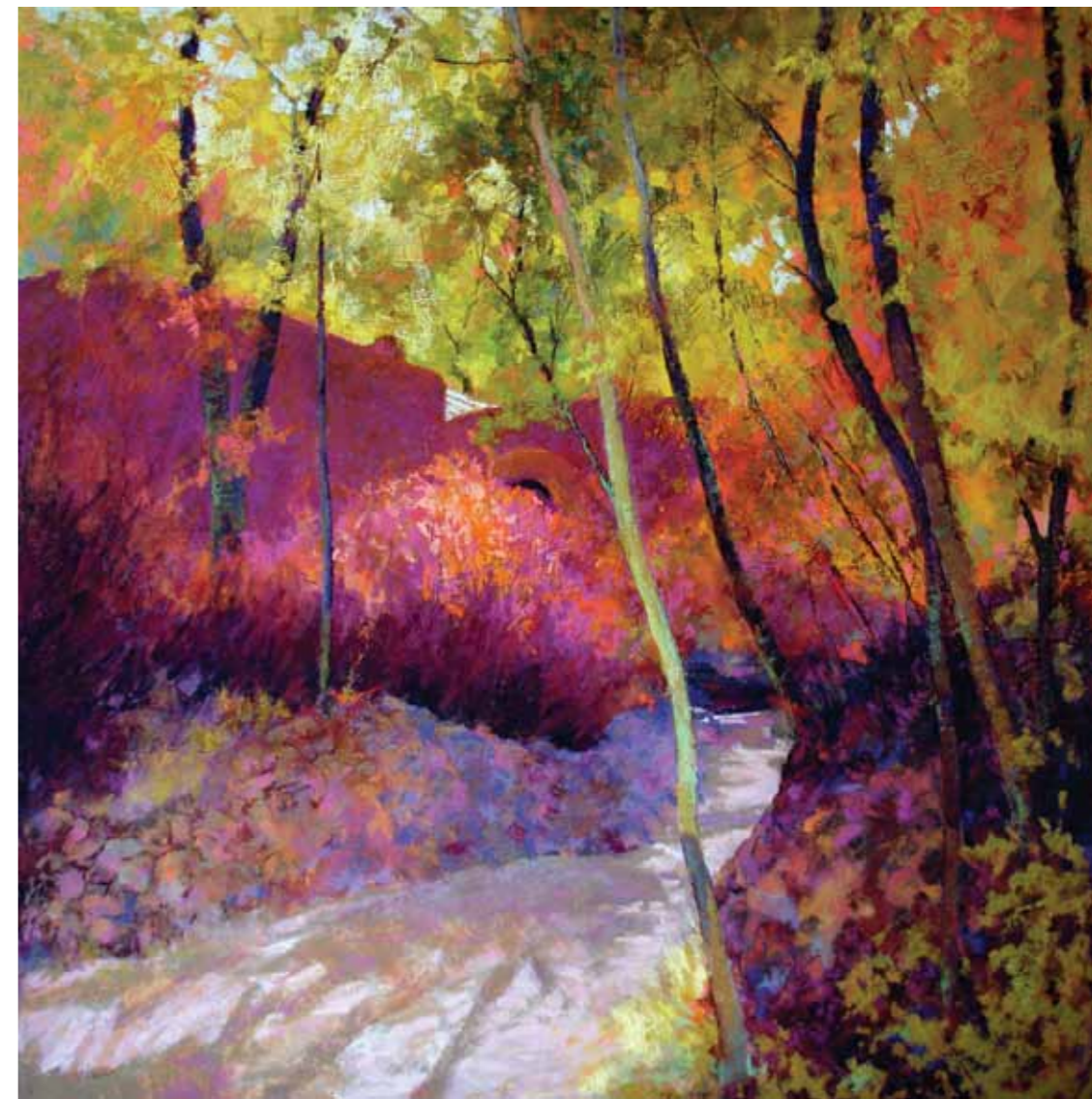
### about the artist

Born in New York City, Elizabeth Sandia, has a background as an illustrator, advertising art director, architectural designer, and instructor. (Sandia is a chosen name from 22 years ago). She moved to Santa Fe, NM from Key West, FL in 1995 specifically to become a fine artist.

Elizabeth painted primarily in pastel until 3 years ago and now produces oil paintings in a transparent, interpretive style – a revival of "American Luminism" of the 40s and 50s.

Sandia's love of architecture since her childhood in the Dutch-settled capital city of Albany, NY, led her to paint captivating casitas, old range barns and her on-going series of the 85 northern New Mexico churches.

"I grew up in an urban setting where most everything was paved and life happened mostly indoors. That changed when I moved south then



*Ruby, Magenta and Wine*, pastel, 40 x 40" (102 x 102cm)

west where a whole new natural world spoke to my creative spirit. Moving west feels like I've found 'home'.

Early in her painting career she won awards from the pastel society of the southwest and the pastel society of the west coast. She was included in the art for the embassies program where 3 paintings were selected to hang in the US Embassy in Ankara, Turkey.

Elizabeth's art education started early by being admitted to the High School of Art & Design in NYC and then to the Fashion Institute of Technology in NYC. Later she studied architecture and interior design at Algonquin College in Ottawa, Ontario, whereupon graduation she was invited to each 2 classes there at night.

Her work has appeared over 2 dozen times

in art publications and on the cover of 4 of them. One of her paintings is part of Carole Katchen's "200 Great Painting Ideas for Artists" published in '98.

Her painting "Early Winter" is on the cover of Cindy Bellinger's book "Into the Heat" just published 2011.

### Representation

**Ann Korologos Gallery**, Basalt, CO  
**West Lives on Gallery**, Jackson, WY  
**Abend Gallery**, Denver, CO  
**Greenberg Fine Art**, Santa Fe, NM  
**Ernest Fuller Fine Art**, Denver-Arvada, CO

### Contact details:

Email: sandiaelizabeth@gmail.com