

JOVE WANG

# Spontaneous Responses to Well Known Locations

We all have our favorite places in the world, but can artists show them to us in new ways? During a recent painting trip to Europe, Jove Wang challenged himself to find unique emotional responses to familiar locations.

Stroll along the Seine in Paris, the Grand Canal in Venice, or below the Swiss Alps, and you're bound to find artists by their easels, painting in the same locations where Whistler, Monet, Sargent, Moran, and dozens of other masters created their most famous pictures in the 19th and 20th centuries. The question one wants to ask these contemporary artists is: How can you possibly find your own fresh response to such familiar subjects? The answer you'd receive from Californian Jove Wang is at once simple and profound. "I carefully select locations that have the elements I need to make

a strong picture, and then I let my first feelings about the places lead my work," he explains. "In the end, the paintings are not about the buildings, land formation, water, or sky in the scene, but rather, they are attempts to capture the soul of the place and the context of everything in it."

The "first feelings" that guide Wang are different for each location, and they are prompted by his reaction to the light, atmosphere, color, structure, history, and spirit of the places. "For example, France gave me the impression of romance, and subtlety in color harmony," says the man who trained in his native China and



**Holiday in Venice**

2010, oil, 16 x 20 in.

All art images courtesy American Legacy Fine Arts, Pasadena, CA

Jove Wang creates a plein air sketch of the Louvre alongside the Rive Gauche in Paris, France



immigrated to the United States in 1990. “Venice conveyed to me a unique mood, transpiring from the aged buildings surrounded by water canals, shimmering in the plants and windows of those buildings, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. Switzerland, with its vastness and grandeur, inspired a completely different series of landscape paintings.”

Perhaps the freshness of Wang’s paintings of well known locations comes from his incorporation of a few identifiable landmarks — a Venetian gondola, the mansard roof atop the Louvre, or a

mountain draped with snow. And then there is his energetic use of oil colors, pushing them to form swirling mounds of light and shadow. The plein air paintings are at once abstract and undeniable, atmospheric and precise, formless and solid. By striking that precarious balance between expression and observation, Wang affords viewers a unique look at familiar scenes.

While on location in Europe in 2010, Wang created small drawings, color studies, and plein air paintings using quick, lush strokes of oil color. These aggressively painted small panels



**1. Jove Wang paints on Rue Paul Bert in Aix en Provence, France**

**2. Creating a plein air painting in Venice, Italy**

suggest an artist overtaken with emotion and consumed by a raging desire to capture everything happening at a moment in time. Even so, the formal structure of these outdoor paintings, as well as the studio pictures resulting from them, makes clear that Wang carefully considers each new subject and thoughtfully prepares for his attack with a brush.

“I always start with small drawing sketches and color studies for both my plein air and studio work,” says Wang. “It is important that I confirm the design and composition in charcoal



**Piazza Navona, Italy**  
2010, oil, 9 x 12 in.



**Venice Sunset**  
2010, oil, 7 x 11 in.



**Village in Provence**

2010, oil, 6 x 8 in.



**La Ferme, Outside Barbizon, France**

2010, oil, 4 x 8 in.

or graphite drawings until I am satisfied. The color sketch will solidify my ideas about value and temperature before I proceed to paint.”

Technical and aesthetic considerations are also important to Wang as he paints well considered subjects. “Color is very important to me,” he says, “but there are many choices one can make in dealing with artists’ pigments. Apart from the fundamental application of the three primary colors, I emphasize the use of gray tones to achieve a harmonious relationship between the major colors, especially in the highlighted areas. I achieve unity by surrounding strong colors with grays that have the desired value and temperature. Powerful colors cannot stand alone and reveal their beauty. They must be surrounded by the proper grays to establish the necessary value and temperature contrast. Those surrounding gray colors provoke excitement and create

contrast without conflicting with the harmony or unity of the painting.”

Wang adds, “At the same time I consider issues of color, I weigh the impact of composition, value, rhythm, contrast, expression — all the formal aspects of painting that contribute to the unity of a painting.”

That unity and impact are almost the same for both small plein air studies completed on location and larger studio paintings developed in the artist’s Southern California studio. He clearly has the ability to look at his sketches and studies and take himself back through time and space to the moment he responded to a scene directly in front of him. There is the same balance of freedom and control in the studio as there was on the streets of Paris or along the canal in Venice.

The formal aspects of Wang’s approach to painting became ingrained in his thinking as a young artist studying at the prestigious Zhejiang Academy of Fine Art (now the China Academy of Art). He then tested his skills by making the



**La Gare, Chamonix, France**

2010, oil, 8 x 10 in.

modern equivalent of a Grand Tour of Europe, where he studied the art and architecture of the old masters.

Wang’s paintings of Switzerland, France, and Italy were recently presented in a solo exhibition at the American Legacy Fine Arts gallery in Pasadena, California. Earlier, a large group of his figure and landscape paintings was included in an oversized monograph titled *Instinct & Feeling: Jove Wang’s Oil Painting*, published in 2003. The book includes a chronology of Wang’s professional and personal accomplishments, including awards he received at plein air festivals in Carmel and Laguna, California, in the Gold Medal Exhibit of the California Art Club, and in exhibitions organized by Oil Painters of America. For more information, visit Wang’s website: [www.jovewang.com](http://www.jovewang.com). 

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