

# Into *Plein Air*

Santa Barbara painter  
and gallery owner  
Ralph Waterhouse  
sheds light on  
*plein air* painting

by Victoria Charters

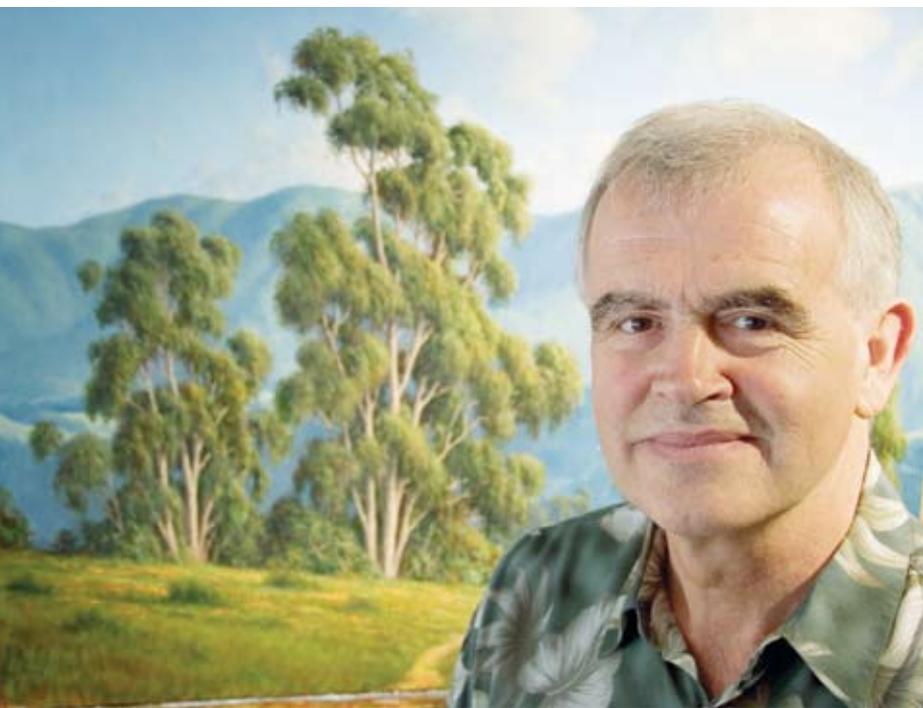
Right: Ralph Waterhouse makes  
his home (literally) Santa  
Barbara's Waterhouse Gallery.  
Photo by Geneva Bumb.



*Times Square at Night*, Mark Lague. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy Waterhouse Gallery.



*Evening Shower*, Michael Mao. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy Waterhouse Gallery.



Above: Waterhouse poses with his *Spring Day*. Oil on canvas. Image courtesy Waterhouse Gallery.

As a *plein air* painter, Ralph Waterhouse finds his inspiration all around him.

A lover of the countryside, he has found a special haven in Santa Barbara where, despite juggling the commitments of a gallery owner, he finds time to pick up a brush five days a week, sometimes painting all day out in the field.

Painting outdoors is a race against the changing light. You have to watch out if painting over a period of time or you might find yourself “chasing the shadows.” The use of a digital camera can help to capture fleeting moments that disappear quickly and to record the optimum light before it passes. Upon his return to the studio, a large computer monitor helps the painter relive the scene in detail.

Ralph found a way to have some control over his destiny early on in his career when he began showing his work—along with that of his friends and other local artists—in the room next to his studio in Ambleside, England. The tradition he started there has persisted at The Waterhouse Gallery, the premises upstairs from which Ralph continues to call home.

The Waterhouse Gallery gets submissions every day, and the thirty-five to forty artists represented by the gallery are handpicked by Ralph himself. There are a number of *plein air* painters, as the style of the gallery generally focuses on the representational or impressionistic. Recent exhibitions include *New York to Rome* by Canadian-born Mark Lague, whose stunning paintings infuse a vibrancy into everyday life. Coming up is *Figures*, featuring award-winning and nationally-known artists Scott Burdick, Jackie Chiu, C.M. Cooper, Nancy Seamons Crookston, Gil DiCiccio, Sean Diediker, Kim English, Lindsay Goodwin, Ray Hunter, Yingzhoa Liu, Huihan Liu, Elizabeth Locke, Susan Lyon, Mark Lague, Michael Mao, Craig Nelson, Matthew Peak, Randy Sexton, Brandon Smith, Hodges Soileau, Zhiwei Tu, Jove Wang, Jeffrey R. Watts and Shawn Zent.

*Figures.*

The Waterhouse Gallery.

La Arcada Court, 1114 State Street, #9. Santa Barbara.

[www.waterhousegallery.com](http://www.waterhousegallery.com).