

Susan Darwin's Artist's Statement March 2026

Susan began her 10-year Location Series in 2020, turning her attention to a different location each year and creating 20 paintings annually that serve as a visual essay of what that location inspires and what it means to her. In a hurried world, where we are all caught up in our own stories, this series examines how a location can have the power not only to define us, but to awaken us and hopefully teach us to be here at any given moment. Starting at a grand property on the banks of the Hudson River, she painted natural objects and tranquil scenes at the Locust Grove Estate in Poughkeepsie, New York, in 2020; produced a variety of paintings having to do with New Bedford, Massachusetts, in 2021; made works pertaining to life and land in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in 2022; captured the diversity of the towns, flora, and fauna of New Jersey in 2023; and then traveled the East Coast in 2024, painting a 6.5-pound lobster and other sea creatures as well as vistas from Newfoundland to Florida.

In the sixth year of the series, 2025, she traveled Cross Country looking for inspiration. Darwin says: "This past year took me to California and up the West Coast to Oregon. I was also able to paint in Detroit and Las Vegas. One year is not nearly enough time to cover the ground I had intended with "Cross Country," but the assignment nevertheless gave me an abundance of options to explore. The Location Series is meant to highlight all there is that is explorable, near and far. I'm interested in going to places and looking for paintings. About one-third of my paintings are done plein air, on location, and almost all are painted alla prima, all at once. Another third are done from life, from objects that I bring into the studio. And the remaining third are simply whatever I'm drawn to paint . . . often inspired by a great photo (my own) or occasionally by a remarkable historical image.

"I started painting in college (Regis College in Weston, Massachusetts) and spent some time at the Art Students League in New York City, but it wasn't until I started painting with artist Alan Turner that I felt free enough to express myself easily with oil paints. (Turner, an acclaimed NYC painter who was taught by David Hockney, died in 2020). I generally use the same nine colors adopted from Turner's palette. However, I don't use his process of first using charcoal to sketch out the structure of the painting. Rather I start with one color, usually yellow ochre, to capture my first impressions of the gesture of the scene. I'm after the personality of what I'm looking at, whether it's a clam shell, a mountain view, or a great historical photo or painting.

Many times we are all blissfully stunned by a view, a natural object, or a person. We can be stunned out of our busy day-to-day obligations and routines and into a feeling that hits deep inside and triggers a nerve that sparks a connection to our universal core spirit. That connection reminds us of how lucky we are to be here right now. These days, in the middle of my 10-year-long Location Series, I'm not wed to any one location for more than a year. There is too much to see for me to settle down just yet, if ever. Wanderlust is something we all feel as we travel through life. These paintings are more than souvenirs; they are portals to another realm. They also remind us that although we may choose a certain smaller life, expanding is always possible and available. In the end, nature and the world around us are endlessly fascinating and life-giving. From a shell found in Oregon to the skyline of Detroit and the bare, early morning winter trees of Maplewood, New Jersey, it's a big, beautiful world out there."