

Four thumbs up for the Studio Italia workshop!

by **Marion Jean Hall**

Painting workshops are easy to find on the Internet. However, thrifty artists must ask the big question: Which ones are worth the investment of time, effort and money?

Based on my recent experience at a ten-day workshop in Tuscany, I can heartily endorse Studio Italia, led by Prof. Yves M. Larocque of the Ottawa School of Art and Monica Marquez, his able partner. (See http://www.walkthearts.com/painting_workshops/art_courses_tuscany_intro.shtml).

At \$2,790 per person, plus air fare, my husband and I initially hesitated at the price. But, given how much fun it was and how much was included: 10 nights accommodation, 10 breakfasts, 8 lunches, 9 dinners, all the ground transportation, the train ticket to Florence and the entrance to the Uffizi, to say nothing of ten days' painting instruction and numerous art history lectures, we certainly consider it to have been excellent value.

Studio Italia is a residential workshop operating out of *La Fratta*, a centuries-old agricultural estate located near the town of Sinalunga in Tuscany. *La Fratta's* charming facilities are rustic enough to be interesting and modern enough to be comfortable. The large main living/dining room, complete with huge fireplace,



Peter and the olive branch at Castelmuzio

doubles as workshop and meeting space. The bedrooms all have comfortable beds plus their own private shower and toilet. These facilities are all on the upper floor of a renovated two-storey agricultural building, so they are not suitable for people who have difficulty climbing stairs. The estate itself covers over four hundred hectares, with many walking paths and a large outdoor swimming pool for those who wish to get exercise.

During the workshop, Prof. Larocque provides instruction suitable for people working at various levels and in various media. Our group included painters in watercolour, acrylic and oil, plus my dear husband, an absolute beginner who was determined to learn to draw in perspective. *La Fratta* itself offers plenty of interesting subject matter for painting, sketching and photography—such as lovely old brick buildings with archways and tile rooftops; and fields and furrows with Tuscan hill villages in the distance. Even so, Yves provided transportation every day to picturesque nearby locations for plein air painting—Pienza, Montepulciano, Val d'Orchia, Cortona, Castelmuzio, Lucignano... He also provided helpful feedback and interesting exercises aimed at expanding our ways of seeing and thinking.

Painting all day can be tiring, so meals are important. Monica Marquez worked miracles in the kitchen, providing plentiful, delicious meals using a wide variety of interesting local ingredients. With her characteristic cheerfulness and tact, Monica made sure that participants with allergies received appropriate and tasty food at every meal. She and Yves created a warm, friendly atmosphere at mealtime, with the help of candlelight, lots of good house wine, and their own boundless generosity and enthusiasm, which led to long, enjoyable conversations about art and the meaning of life.

Yves gave several interesting illustrated lectures on art history, emphasizing the Renaissance period, which started in this very region. He led us on tours of Assisi and Florence, with on-going commentary on the

(continued on the following page / suite à la page suivante)



Tom, Denise, Barbara, Yves and Shirley outside our residence with Ann and Peter in the back-ground.



Tom Sloat and Yves Larocque drawing at La Fratta.



Yves making preparations for the show

art and architecture we were seeing. As someone new to Italy, I was glad that he and Monica also translated for us as required. I appreciated the many special arrangements that they took care of for us, such as a wine-tasting in Montepulciano, and an exhibition of our works in conjunction with a charitable fund-raiser at *La Fratta*.

Yves and Monica encouraged us to try everything on offer, but they did not pressure my husband when he preferred to stay at *La Fratta* and work on his drawings rather than accompany us to the plein air painting sites.

Tom's drawing improved dramatically during the workshop, much to his satisfaction, and he has come home with several pieces to be proud of. We would both highly recommend the Studio Italia experience.

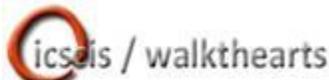
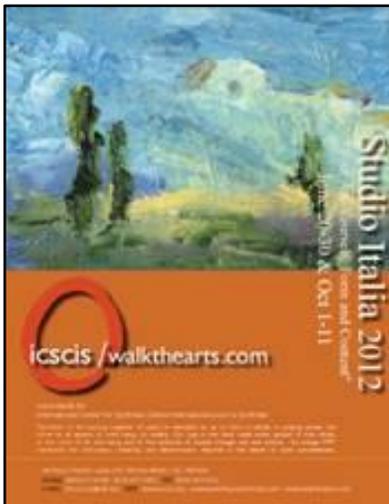


Barbara preparing the mid-term critique



Join us in Tuscany for Studio Italia 2012 - June 16-26 or October 1-11

http://www.walkthearts.com/PDF/Prospectus_Studio_Italia_2012_EN.pdf



www.walkthearts.com

www.icscis.org

Live a unique art experience!
Ten full days of painting, art history, art theory, group discussions and gastronomic cuisine in the heart of Tuscany!

Email: walkthearts@walkthearts.com

and info.icscis@bell.net

Tel: 819-457-1892 (Ottawa region)
(800) 611-4789 (e.s.t.)



We strongly believe that it is through a comprehensive understanding of the arts, and therefore culture, that we will witness a betterment of our society.

Nous croyons fermement que ce n'est que par une plus grande compréhension des arts et de la culture que nous aboutirons à une meilleure société.

Creemos firmemente que solo a través de una mejor comprensión del arte y de la cultura lograremos un mejoramiento en nuestra sociedad.