

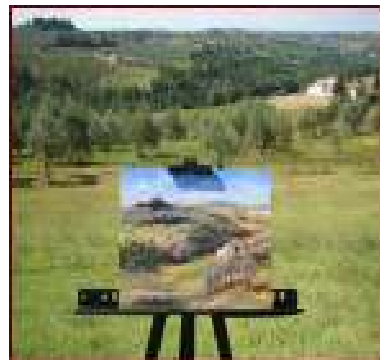
The Art of Chianti (by Gina Ruggiero, Villa Vita International - Sept 2008)

During the week of August 17th - 24th, while many Italians were still on holiday for Ferragosto - a few artists from Phoenix took in the Chianti Countryside with their eyes, with their paints, pastels and with their hearts. We spent a wonderful week once again at Il Borgo Villa di Bossi Pucci located just south of Florence near the town of Montespertoli. Pastel artist Liz Kenyon created this trip to allow fellow artists to join her while she worked on her own series.



On the day we arrived, we all checked into our simple and elegant apartments just prior to a huge downpour which drenched the land and, as quickly as it came, the skies opened back up to bright sunshine and puffy white clouds. We all enjoyed a wonderful welcome antipasti - which is typically appetizers but always turns into a grand feast at Il Borgo. We enjoyed fresh tomatoes picked from the garden, Il Borgo's own wine and olive oil from their nearby castle estate, hand-made pasta and bread made by Alessandro's 8 year old son Francesco and much more. Above, Liz helps set the tone for the joyful week ahead. Ahhhh Chianti!

After a much needed siesta and time to unpack and get settled, we hopped into the van to take a good look at the surrounding beauty which would make its way onto the canvas over the next few days. At right is Barb's wonderful interpretation of Il Borgo's grand front yard.





The next day, the artists found their places around Il Borgo to begin their "field sketches" and record their interpretations of the Chianti countryside. The artists would create several paintings over the next few days of various sites in and around Il Borgo and the surrounding towns. The property itself lent many opportunities for artists with its fiascos

and courtyards, cypress lined drive, charming chapel and sprawling valley views.

With Florence only 20 minutes away, we always make sure to include a full day visit during our stays at Il Borgo. Our artists opted to visit the Uffizi Gallery and Academia to view some of Florence's most treasured works of art including Michelangelo's David and Botticelli's Birth of Venus. We strolled along the River Arno and spent some time on the infamous



Ponte Vecchio. Piazza Signori is always a focus of attention while in Florence with its grand statues and fountains. We also made some time to view the amazing Duomo and Baptistry as well as enjoy some gelato, of course!



Another wonderful field trip was to the small town of Volpaia just north of Radda in Chianti. This little gem of a town has a small cafe in the central piazza and a wonderful restaurant called La Bottega both owned by two sisters who have lived in Volpaia for over 70 years. We had incredible views of the valley from our table and enjoyed a



variety of wonderful dishes from the country kitchen such as handmade ravioli and tagliatelle with mushrooms. In Volpaia, there are no gift shops, markets or tobacco stores and best of all, there is no traffic! Streets and doorways are lined with flower pots bursting with colorful plants and herbs. Here the artists set up their easels in town to capture some of the beauty this town offers. A small tour group of American students came through on foot admiring Liz's work and the aspiring artists among them longed to join us!



To view more of Liz Kenyon's Art, please visit www.lizkenyon.com



Poppiano was another very special place just minutes from Il Borgo and her grand castle was always in view from our rooms. The sunflowers in the foreground had since passed with the exception of a few late bloomers, however, the scene was no less magnificent. We set up along the cypress line road in front of vineyards, peach, pear, and olive trees with the castle in the distance and Puccini playing in the background courtesy of our laptop. The sun was hot and bright - the colors brilliant. The

clouds moved in giving the artists a bit of shade and offered new hues and puffy clouds for their skies. The interpretation of the scene was varied and interesting. It was another lovely day in the Chianti countryside.

Our visit to Chianti through artist's eyes has opened my eyes even more to the marvelous beauty, the brilliant colors, patterns, and patchwork this land beholds all which has been created by the fine hands of the agricultural artists of Tuscany and dutifully and respectfully preserved by the creative and talented hands of our artists Liz, Barb, Alicia and Barbara from Phoenix, Arizona.



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