6-2-1943

Paul to Dario July 2, 1943

Paul Sargent

Follow this and additional works at: http://thekeep.eiu.edu/paul_sargent_letters

Recommended Citation
Sargent, Paul, "Paul to Dario July 2, 1943" (1943). Letters and Correspondence. 68.
http://thekeep.eiu.edu/paul_sargent_letters/68

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Paul Turner Sargent at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in Letters and Correspondence by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.
I was glad to get your letter.

Well, your luck seems to be good at the start of army life. To be quartered on the brink of the Pacific is certainly better than sweating in some of the southern camps with nothing particularly interesting to look at.

I never tired of watching the water; it was always interesting, the constant change and the play of light and color. I did not see it many times when there were clouds, and usually the sun was ahead of me so I don’t know much about the light and color in other directions. But like the landscape the richest color I am sure in looking toward the sun the sunlight showing through and reflected from the leaves filtering through the water and reflected in glints on its surface.

Here is my analysis of the color effect as I studied it, as I stated, looking mostly toward the sun. The prevailing color of the water near at hand and out a hundred yds. Or so is a grayish yellow green which is the sunlight striking some distance down into the rather clear water. Into this are the modifying tones, the reflections from the sky which is purple or blue (or gray if clouds). Near at hand is the yellow green which gradually merges into the blue or purple of the distant water. Reversing, coming toward shore the blue and purple gradually play out. Maybe a diagram will help to explain what I mean.

(Diagram in letter)

As the waves come in one sees into their near slopes a few feet, that is the yellow green sunlight. One sees the back slope also of the waves and these are opaque, we do not see into the water there but see a reflections from the sky, the color will come from the sky low down or high up depending on angle (distance away) that we see it, waves are cup shaped, are concave mirrors so will reflect at a greater angle than a straight mirror. The reflections close at hand from sky will be strong blue or purple because they were from high up in the sky, farther away the reflection comes from the sky low down so is gray not blue, yet the water at horizon is blue but I believe it will be near...
that it is lighter in tone and less blue than the reflections near from sky.

To paint what I have described I think best to paint all the water out a few hundred feet a yellow gray, rather gray, then paint the balance to horizon a grayish blue. Next paint the blue or purple reflections from sky near by into the gray green which will gray the blue some, as you paint farther away the blues at front and back will emerge and the gray green at front will show in smaller and smaller spots as you get farther away. The greatest contrast in color will be the gray green yellow and the purple blue as they cut across each other just a short distance away, 50 yds or so, or less.

What I have given is just a part, the white caps are another problem. If there are large rocks in the water, or not you will find the big waves repeating themselves as they come. That repetition gives you and chance for study. The big waves (and they come in a series of several) will be yellow green with the light coming through but in the thinner parts where sunlight can penetrate it will be straight yellow green. From this yellow green spot the color will go somewhat cooler as it gets farther away. Where the waves break into foam and spray it is yellow and pink (like a cloud and lighter than the sky) in sunlight, and in shadow the foam is blue, purple or blue green (or all together). The kind of sky determines your color just as it does in landscapes, but water reflects more of it. Colors of water are similar to those of snow cool usually predominates. Just after a big wave hits rocks or shore there will be a great boiling for a bit with very green spots chumming up from below. At low tide can see very green and very purple sea weeds.

Remember the principles of landscape apply likewise to water. Where the sunlight strikes it is yellow, pink, or orange, and in shadow it is a cool color of some kind wherever the sky can reflect, but back in under a big wave are warmish spots and sides of rocks or caves where shaded.

If you sit close to water, watch the tide—if it is coming in the waves will come higher and higher and you may think yourself safe but an extra large one will surprise you. I have
heard of many people getting near drowned this way, and being battered against the rocks is no fun.

I hope what I have said will help you in painting the water. I understand the principles but having been away from the water so long I would not attempt to paint a seascape now from sketches that I have. It would be a cold blooded affair. I wish I could be by the sea occasionally.

You asked about the color of the mountains. Yes, they are cool purple and blue as you say but there is always some variant color in them. I saw the warm color as you do and I emphasized the warmth of distance too much in some of my pictures. The warmth I saw I know now was reflections from a canyon wall like diagram (diagram in letter). Sunlight struck mountain (1) and was reflected across canyon to mountain (2). But we must learn not to see warm color in distance, too much of it, it upsets the whole plan of painting, to get realism. We have to do one of two things—emphasize warm colors close at hand with color in distance, or the reverse. A sunset is the reverse system, but in the sunset we can force the warm color only so much or it won’t stay in the distance. You recall I had you look through a hole in a green leaf at the distance to see relatively how cool the distance really is. Try that on your warm color in mountains. A green leaf, or a yellow or orange or red paper will do—it just establishes the relativity of color. With that test I think you will see that your warm color in mountains is just a warm purple in the cool surrounding color and not orange of yellow.

I had an eye and mind opener when I first saw the California desert flowers in bloom. Coming out of mountains the whole flat desert was just color for sq. mile after sq. mile, to the mountains 10 miles away. There were all kinds of flowers but lupines predominated, they are strong royal purple or blue and their color was so intense that the distinct mountains looked warm gray. So remember that both values and color are relative to each other

I haven’t received your announcement of commencement.

I’m glad to hear you have already impressed your superiors with your paint brushes if only on a garbage can or the like.

I haven’t painted much this spring and there have been no exhibits. I got one study of the iris flowers and now am working
on some hollyhocks. Flowers are hard to do. I think flowers would be good for students to tackle soon. The flowers will impress upon a student the importance of clean color for unless one paints directly with pure colors and white on these brilliant flowers the result is sorry to see. Your sea painting will impress you the same way—there is no place for mud in a sea picture.

We are having cool weather now, a few days, after two or three weeks of about as disagreeable weather as I remember. Very sticky it was with temperature around 90 degrees and high humidity. I have felt 104-5-6 degrees every day for weeks with not as much discomfort. The moisture does it.

I am rather busy with the garden—about one acre altogether. Long continued rains in May and June upset my planting schedule so I am trying to catch up. The rain and coolness did us much harm as it kept the bees and insects from fertilizing the pear, apple, and plum trees; so we have very little of any of those although there was lots of blooms. Pears almost never fail—but did this year.

No painting class of any kind. About 3 weeks ago interest lagged and I called it off. No class with the school. I hear that only about 250 students in school this summer.

Best wishes,
Paul T.