

# A FINELY TUNED VOICE

Dan Schultz portrays relatable figures in luminous California landscapes.

BY Ruth Rodgers



**IN A BLOG POST FROM DECEMBER 2020**, reflecting on the challenges of a pandemic world, California artist Dan Schultz listed eight things that the practice of art can teach us. “Making art,” he said, “can help us realize that we each have a voice. It can teach us patience, perseverance, problem-solving, courage, appreciation of beauty and the seemingly contradictory characteristics of self-confidence and humility.” Schultz’s own trajectory through the art world has clearly led to the development of all these characteristics.

## PATIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE

Although only his woodcarving, guitar-playing father offered any kind of artistic model during Schultz’s childhood in New Mexico, the artist was fortunate to have a high school art teacher recognize his potential. A drawing from that art class won first place in a national high school art competition, which gave Schultz the confidence to enroll in a commercial art program at Pensacola Christian College, in Florida. There he learned to fulfill a design brief successfully, leading to a short career in graphic design

after graduation. The young artist, however, felt that he’d not yet found his own artistic voice. He needed to keep searching.

Through research, Schultz found the Cottonwood Art Academy (now known as Cottonwood Center for the Arts), in Colorado Springs, and took classes from working artists such as Skip Whitcomb, Matt Smith and Chuck Mardosz. They took him outdoors, opening his eyes to the colors in the landscape, the potential of light and the possibility of making a living as a fine artist. He became so proficient that the Academy hired him as the youngest instructor in their history.

Schultz got better and better at painting, yet he began to feel stuck in a hyperrealistic style, a legacy of his graphic design background. He wanted more out of his artistic life.

ABOVE  
**Quiet Place** (oil on linen panel, 12x16)

OPPOSITE  
**Rock Collector** (oil on linen panel, 12x16)