



Roland Lee's Pastoral *A Patch of Blue*

Southern Utah's majestic landscape lured Roland Lee from California more than 30 years ago. Since then the former ad agency illustrator and art professor has earned a reputation as one of the most significant painters of Utah's vivid landscape. Transparent watercolor is his specialty, Zion National Park his favorite subject.

"Our family has a cabin on the east boundary of Zion. We bought a little five-acre parcel right after we moved from Los Angeles. So I spend a lot of time hiking in the park," he said explaining that the painting on this edition's cover, *A Patch of Blue*, captures a peaceful time along the North Fork of the Virgin River. "At times it can be a very turbulent river that roils through there. That is how the canyon was carved, but it can also be a very passive river. That's what I wanted to capture—the peaceful water reflecting those brilliant red cliffs and the blue skies. It's a place I enjoy."

Like all of Lee's work the 21" x 29" painting evokes strong feelings. "Art is always about human emotion," he said. "I do not try to replicate or document an actual scene. I try to relate what I experienced while there."

To facilitate his work, Lee records images via a sketchbook and pocket camera. He also does small paintings on location. "I never paint a place I've never seen, but I never paint directly from a photo either. I use photos and sketches for reference and rely on my emotions. In the studio I work to enhance the colors to capture the mood. My work isn't about how high the mountain or how wide the river. It's about the feeling—the cool air and the warm sun bouncing off the rocks, the way it all affects the senses. That's what I try to present."

Lee has traveled the world, capturing the essence of landscapes from Europe to the South Pacific, yet St. George remains his favorite destination. "I've been to lots of countries, but I enjoy being here as much as any place," he said. ■

