



Seeing and not just noticing

By **TOM MORTON** Star-Tribune staff writer | Posted: Friday, August 5, 2011 4:17 pm

A lifetime of nearsightedness and astigmatism has left me with the ability to notice, but not see.

So visiting with several artists Thursday was a little intimidating. The rocks weren't just brown and the trees weren't just gray. The fauna wasn't just green, either.

Ginny Butcher, Karen Henneck, and Bonnie Halsey-Dutton pointed out the reds, golds, blues, and lots of other colors in the grass, sage, leaves and other growing stuff. And all those combinations can change in a minute depending on the position of the sun, shadows and clouds.

The two-week "Prairies to Peaks, a Plein Air in Wyoming" event sponsored by the Wyoming Land Trust and organized by Deselms Fine Art in Cheyenne attracted these three and about 50 other artists to paint or draw scenes in Wyoming. They can create as much art as they want, and submit three entries each for judging. They also will do "quick draw" performances next Saturday in Cheyenne.

The "plein air" -- painting outside -- practice coincided with the Impressionist movement in late 19th century France, when the likes of Monet, Renoir and Pissarro exited the studios for the great outdoors and saw how light played upon water, children, natural and manmade structures. They used bright colors and short brush strokes to capture movement and the immediacy of the moment.

Ginny, Karen and Bonnie showed how they would use oils or pastels to illustrate the same landscape, yet come up with unique works for the same time and day, in the same light. They said their job was to exaggerate the colors and shapes to draw the eye and give an insight the viewer never would have had otherwise.

For a couple of hours, I could see colors I hadn't seen before and realized how much passes me by.

These artists also reminded me as a journalist that life offers far more than corruption, bureaucracy, deadlines, petty disputes, politics, big ideas, and ugly things no one ever should have to encounter.

May the spirit of artists bless us all.