

# Artists & Illustrators

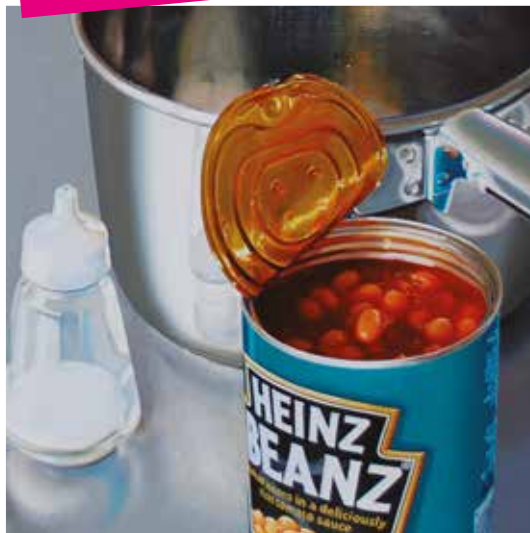
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# WELCOME TO OUR REALIST ART SPECIAL



You'd be forgiven for thinking that we'd just put together some nice photos on the cover this month, such is the jaw-dropping level of realism obtained by the various artists behind them. The shine of metal, the twinkle in an eye, the blur of parts seemingly out of focus; each meticulous detail demands you to ask: "What am I really looking at? And how *did* they do it?"

During the 1600s, tricking the viewer was an increasingly popular pastime for artists and the resulting artworks were known as *trompe l'œil* – literally 'deceive the eye'. The paintings in our special should be viewed as a modern-day equivalent of Carel Fabritius's iconic *The Goldfinch*, in which the bird's perch appears to protrude in three dimensions from a still-painterly work.

The one main difference is that our 13 paintings used photography to aid the creative process. Don't dismiss them as mere exercises in copying, however. In each case, skillful draughtsmanship and surprisingly painterly brushwork has elevated the work to masterpiece status. Find out how they were made on page 18.

Steve Pill, Editor

**STOP PRESS!** Don't forget that there is still time to visit our *Artists of the Year* exhibition, which runs 22-27 February at the Mall Galleries, London SW1.

## Get real too!

Send us your latest photo-inspired paintings and realistic art. We'll publish the best ones in our next issue...

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**EDITORIAL** Editor Steve Pill **Deputy Editor** Katie McCabe **Art Editor** Alicia Fernandes **Contributors** Hashim Akib, Grahame Booth, Laura Boswell, Rebecca Bradbury, Anne-Marie Butlin, Lizet Dingemans, Siân Dudley, Laura Freeman, Anne Purkiss, Michael Regan, Sarah Spencer, Jake Spicer, Radoslav Topalov, Andrea Turvey and Adèle Wagstaff **ONLINE ENQUIRIES** [support@artistsandillustrators.co.uk](mailto:support@artistsandillustrators.co.uk) **ADVERTISING** Advertisement Manager Tom O'Byrne (020) 7349 3738 [tom.obyrne@chelseamagazines.com](mailto:tom.obyrne@chelseamagazines.com) **Advertising Production** allpointsmidia [www.allpointsmidia.co.uk](http://www.allpointsmidia.co.uk)  
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# YOUR LETTERS...

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### AGE OLD PROBLEMS

Re: The Campaign for Cadmium, Issue 360

Your article about the campaign for cadmium was great news. I particularly liked the penultimate paragraph referring to recognition of the 'artist fraternity' as a community in its own right.

This fraternity has existed for a little longer than we might think. I like to imagine the Paleolithic cave painters discussing the relative merits of iron oxides, manganese dioxide and charcoal (earth, clay, rocks and bones) or the various binders and 'extenders' (animal fat, blood, water and urine) that they might employ. The cave painters at Lascaux are believed to have travelled 25 miles for a reliable source of pigments – not those student-quality versions they could pick up in the local cave!

**Stewart Roberts, Hereford**

### STREET SCENES

Re: London Landmarks, Issue 360

I was interested to see the Peter Brown series of iconic London buildings and wanted to share an image of my oil painting of a branch of the Halifax Building Society.

I produced this as my part of a local art group project, in which each artist was asked to paint a shop front or building in one of two main streets in Fareham.

All images were painted on the same size canvas and the idea was to depict life in this Hampshire town.

The canvases were displayed together in an exhibition and offered for sale at a set price. The money from sales is now being donated to local charities. The artists gaining no financial reward themselves, just giving up their time and enthusiasm for the project. It attracted a considerable amount of interest from the local public in our "Pop-up Community Gallery" in the Fareham Shopping Centre.

**Christine Dear, Fareham Art Group**  
[www.christine-dear.co.uk](http://www.christine-dear.co.uk)

Sounds like a great success, Christine. If other readers have taken part in local

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Send your letter or email to the addresses below:

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**EMAIL:** [info@artistsandillustrators.co.uk](mailto:info@artistsandillustrators.co.uk)

The writer of our 'letter of the month' will receive a £50 gift voucher from our partner GreatArt, who offers the UK's largest range of art materials with over 50,000 art supplies and regular discounts and promotions.

[www.greatart.co.uk](http://www.greatart.co.uk)



art group projects, we'd love to see the results – share them via the addresses on the left.

### BLOOMING GENEROUS

I am a Salford artist doing my thing in my spare time after work. Retirement looms and I hope to paint more at that time.

I asked permission to paint the Poppies picture [below] at the War Memorial Gardens at Salford Civic Centre. It went well on the day and then took me a few weeks in my studio to complete.

Just before Christmas I donated the painting to Broughton House, a charity-run home for veterans that looked after my father-in-law for four years before he sadly passed on. They will auction it off at the next big event they hold.

**Mike Robinson, via email**

A great picture and a great cause, thanks for sharing Mike.



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Laura Lancaster, *Montage V*, 2015, oil on linen, 260x230cm. Courtesy of the artist and Workplace Gallery Gateshead/London. Photo John David Lawson

## Laura Lancaster

29 January — 8 May 2016

## Jan Vanriet

The Music Boy

29 January — 8 May 2016

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## 9 ARTISTIC THINGS TO DO IN

## MARCH



COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND WORKPLACE GALLERY GATESHEAD/LONDON. PHOTO: DAVID LAWSON

1

## LAURA LANCASTER

Newcastle-based Laura Lancaster is one of the most exciting young painters working in the UK today. Born in Hartlepool, she graduated in fine art from Northumbria University in 2001 and solo exhibitions in Durham, Gateshead and Newcastle followed. The rest of the country is slowly catching up thanks to major display at the New Art Gallery Walsall (29 January to 8 May) which includes a series of diptychs (*Montage XI*, above) inspired by the first and last frames of discarded Super 8 home movies. The artist will be in conversation at the gallery this month as she hosts a free tour of the exhibition (12 March, 2pm). [www.thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk](http://www.thenewartgallerywalsall.org.uk)





2

### BUY Ken Howard Umbrella

Street scene artist Ken Howard RA is often found painting outdoors in all weathers, so what better way to shelter from the rain than this new umbrella (Royal Academy, £24) emblazoned with one of his visions of Venice? [shop.royalacademy.org.uk](http://shop.royalacademy.org.uk)

### 3 DISCOVER Contemporary Watercolour Competition 2016

Royal Watercolour Society president Thomas Plunkett heads up the judging panel for this spring display. Sample a world of watercolour talents at London's Bankside Gallery from 4-16 March. [www.banksidegallery.com](http://www.banksidegallery.com)

4

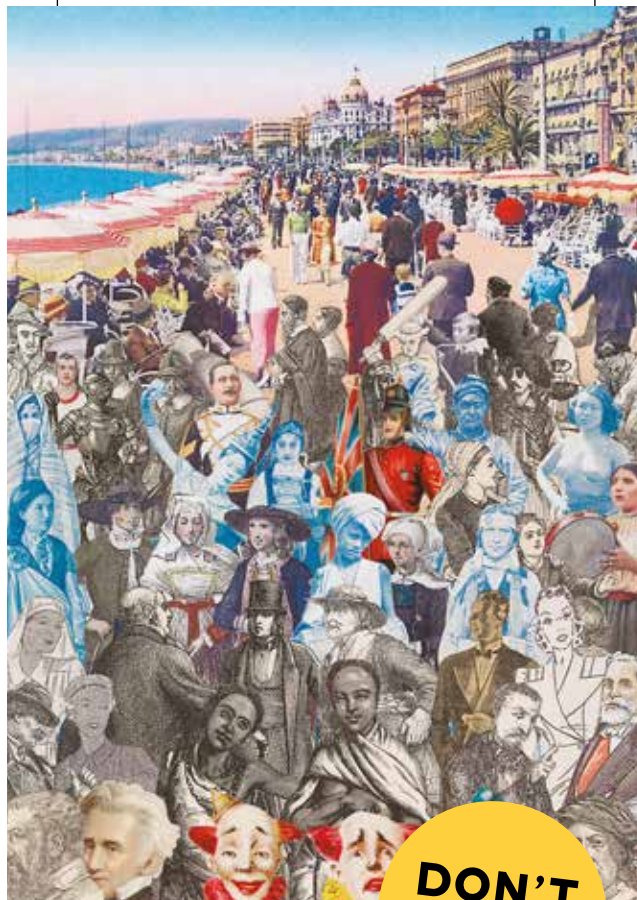
### WATCH Society of Women Artists

Digital submissions are now being accepted for the chance to exhibit alongside SWA member artists, including Anne Blankson-Hemans (*Market Women, Accra*, below) at the society's 155th Annual Exhibition. Enter online by 14 April at [www.society-women-artists.org.uk](http://www.society-women-artists.org.uk)



### 5 EXPLORE The Grand Tour

Four venues in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire will play host to *The Grand Tour*, a second season of exhibitions designed to encourage cultural tourism to the area. Highlights include a collection of Peter Blake collages (*World Tour: Nice, Promenade*, below) at The Harley Gallery in Worksop (20 March to 5 June) and a solo show by Simon Starling at Nottingham Contemporary (19 March to 26 June) that is inspired by local lacemaking. [www.thegrandtour.uk.com](http://www.thegrandtour.uk.com)



© PETER BLAKE. COCA GALLERIES

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### 6 STUDY Art and Mindfulness

This eight-week course at Manchester Art Gallery (every Sunday, 28 February to 1 May) is designed to boost your resilience to stress through creativity. Qualified mindfulness specialists Cathy Fortune and Wendy Teall promise a mix of theory and techniques that draws on the gallery's collections. [www.manchesterartgallery.org](http://www.manchesterartgallery.org)



7

### READ Art Visionaries

From the inward visions of Frida Kahlo to the outré imagination of Salvador Dali, Mark Getlein and Annabel Howard's new book (Laurence King, £24.95) celebrates 75 of the world's most iconic artists to emerge during the last century. [www.laurenceking.com](http://www.laurenceking.com)

### 8 PAINT Indoor Painting with the Plein Air Look

Artists & Illustrators contributor Margaret Evans kicks off her 2016 programme with the chance to develop your landscape painting from the warmth of her Perthshire studio (19-20 March, £190). View her full list of workshops and paintaways at [www.shinafoot.co.uk](http://www.shinafoot.co.uk)

9

### VISIT Affordable Art Fair

17 years on from its Battersea Park debut, Will Ramsay's fair has sister events in New York, Hong Kong and Milan. The original (10-13 March) is still the best – browse for inspiration, pick up a print or even attend a practical art workshop. [www.affordableartfair.com](http://www.affordableartfair.com)





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# EXHIBITIONS

## MARCH'S BEST ART SHOWS

### LONDON

#### **Nikolai Astrup: Painting Norway**

5 February to 15 May

First UK show for the Nordic master – see page 36.  
Dulwich Picture Gallery.  
[www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk](http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk)

#### **Drawing on Childhood**

Until 1 May

Vintage illustrations of fictional characters.  
Foundling Museum. [www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk](http://www.foundlingmuseum.org.uk)

#### **Pre-Raphaelites on Paper**

12 February to 29 May

More than 100 drawings from the Victorian era.  
Leighton House Museum.  
[www.leightonhouse.co.uk](http://www.leightonhouse.co.uk)

#### **Delacroix and the Rise of Modern Art**

17 February to 22 May

Explore the French painter's revolutionary methods.  
National Gallery. [www.nationalgallery.org.uk](http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk)

#### **Russia and the Arts:**

##### **The Age of Tolstoy and Tchaikovsky**

17 March to 26 June

160 years of portraits on loan from Moscow.  
National Portrait Gallery. [www.npg.org.uk](http://www.npg.org.uk)

#### **Painting the Modern Garden: Monet to Matisse**

Until 20 April

Horticultural art that you're bound to dig.  
Royal Academy of Arts. [www.royalacademy.org.uk](http://www.royalacademy.org.uk)

#### **Artist and Empire**

Until 10 April

Colonial-era paintings.  
Tate Britain. [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

### ENGLAND – NORTH

#### **Anthony Clark: Burning Belief**

27 February to 1 May

Following in the footsteps of El Greco and Van Gogh.  
Bowes Museum, Durham.  
[www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk](http://www.thebowesmuseum.org.uk)

#### **Drawn from Life: People on Paper**

27 February to 17 April

Observational sketches by Hockney, Lowry and co.  
The Collection, Lincoln.  
[www.thecollectionmuseum.com](http://www.thecollectionmuseum.com)

#### **Pre-Raphaelites: Beauty and Rebellion**

12 February to 5 June

Victorian art through a Liverpool lens.  
Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.  
[www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk](http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk)

#### **Works to Know by Heart: Matisse in Focus**

Until 3 May

Key works by Henri, including *The Snail*.  
Tate Liverpool. [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk)

#### **Leonardo da Vinci:**

##### **10 Drawings from the Royal Collection**

13 February to 24 April

Exquisite Renaissance draughtsmanship.  
Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle. [www.laingartgallery.org.uk](http://www.laingartgallery.org.uk)

#### **David Jones: Vision and Memory**

12 March to 5 June

Poetic 20th-century watercolours and engravings.  
Djanogly Art Gallery, Nottingham.  
[www.lakesidearts.org.uk](http://www.lakesidearts.org.uk)

#### **Nothing Happens, Twice**

6 February to 4 June

Fantastical works of film, painting and sculpture.

Harris Museum, Preston. [www.harrismuseum.org.uk](http://www.harrismuseum.org.uk)

#### **Bridget Riley: Paintings 1967-1972**

18 February to 25 June

The abstract painter's adoption of colour.  
Graves Gallery, Sheffield.  
[www.museums-sheffield.org.uk](http://www.museums-sheffield.org.uk)

#### **It Was 50 Years Ago Today...**

2 March to 9 April

Six 1960s art college friends in collaboration.  
Stockport Art Gallery. [www.stockport.gov.uk/artgallery](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/artgallery)

#### **Truth and Memory**

25 March to 4 September

Touring show of British art from the First World War.  
York Art Gallery, York. [www.yorkartgallery.org.uk](http://www.yorkartgallery.org.uk)

### ENGLAND – SOUTH

#### **Impressionism: Capturing Life**

13 February to 5 June

Fanciful French paintings in pastel shades.  
The Holburne Museum, Bath. [www.holburne.org](http://www.holburne.org)

#### **Grayson Perry: The Vanity of Small Differences**

Until 10 April

Witty tapestries from the Royal Academician.  
Victoria Art Gallery, Bath. [www.victoriagal.org.uk](http://www.victoriagal.org.uk)

#### **Inquisitive Eyes**

6 February to 12 June

A focus on work produced in a Dorset artist colony.  
Royal West of England Academy, Bristol.  
[www.rwa.org.uk](http://www.rwa.org.uk)

#### **Recording Britain**

6 February to 2 May



### BOTTICELLI REIMAGINED

5 March to 3 July

Sandro Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus* is one of the most iconic and ground-breaking paintings of the early Italian renaissance and more than 500 years later it continues to influence artists and other creatives in new and fascinating ways. Packed with 150 works, this wide-ranging display seeks to show the many ways in which the Italian's ideas of beauty have been interpreted, taking in fashion, photography, film, sculpture and, of course, paintings, from the Pre-Raphaelites to contemporary Chinese artist Yin Xin (2008's *Venus, After Botticelli*, pictured). V&A, London. [www.vam.ac.uk](http://www.vam.ac.uk)



**SHAKESPEARE IN ART:  
TEMPESTS, TYRANTS AND TRAGEDY**

19 March to 19 June

In the 400 years since his death, the plays of William Shakespeare have inspired masterpieces from many of the world's greatest artists. To mark the milestone, this major exhibition will focus on artistic interpretations of a few key texts, including *Macbeth* (via paintings by John Singer Sargent and Henry Fuseli) and *The Tempest* (see Philip James de Loutherbourg's *The Shipwreck*, pictured).

Visitors can immerse themselves in the subject too, thanks to a theatrical audio guide with performances from the Royal Shakespeare Company, while the playwright's Stratford-upon-Avon birthplace is just nine miles from the gallery – perfect for an extended day trip. Compton Verney, Warwickshire. [www.comptonverney.org.uk](http://www.comptonverney.org.uk)

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49 watercolours from WWII war artists.  
Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne.  
[www.townereastbourne.org.uk](http://www.townereastbourne.org.uk)

**John Bratby: Everything But the Kitchen Sink...**  
Until 17 April  
The prolific painter's visions of daily life.  
Jerwood Gallery, Hastings. [www.jerwoodgallery.org](http://www.jerwoodgallery.org)

**Andy Warhol: Works from the Hall Collection**  
4 February to 15 May  
Lesser-known works by the Pop icon.  
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford. [www.ashmolean.org](http://www.ashmolean.org)

**The Romantic Thread in British Art**  
5 February to 4 June  
Dramatic works by Turner, Piper, Nash and more.  
Southampton City Art Gallery.  
[www.southampton.gov.uk](http://www.southampton.gov.uk)

**Edward Lear: Travels and Nonsense**  
13 February to 8 May  
The author's wildlife and landscape art.  
Ashmolean Museum Broadway, Worcestershire.  
[www.ashmoleanbroadway.org](http://www.ashmoleanbroadway.org)

**SCOTLAND**

**Taking a Line for a Walk**  
Until 17 April  
Paul Klee's quote inspires this drawing show.  
The McManus, Dundee. [www.mcmanus.co.uk](http://www.mcmanus.co.uk)

**The Artist and the Sea**

Until 8 May  
Works by John Bellany, Joan Eardley and more.  
City Art Centre, Edinburgh.  
[www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk](http://www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk)

**Masters of the Everyday**

4 March to 24 July  
Meticulous depictions of 17th-century village life.  
The Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse,  
Edinburgh. [www.royalcollection.org.uk](http://www.royalcollection.org.uk)

**Modern Scottish Women:  
Painters and Sculptors 1885-1965**

Until 26 June  
Redressing the male bias in recent art history.  
Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art,  
Edinburgh. [www.nationalgalleries.org](http://www.nationalgalleries.org)

**Comic Invention**

18 March to 17 July  
A history of visual storytelling.  
Hunterian Art Gallery, Glasgow. [www.gla.ac.uk](http://www.gla.ac.uk)

**WALES**

**Augustus John in Focus**  
Until 30 September  
Celebrating the Welsh modernist painter.  
National Museum Cardiff. [www.museumwales.ac.uk](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk)

**Romanticism in the Welsh Landscape**

19 March to 18 June  
Major collection of painting from 1700s to now.  
MoMA Wales, Powys. [www.momawales.org.uk](http://www.momawales.org.uk)

**IRELAND**

**Adam Buck: A Regency Artist from Cork**  
4 February to 9 April  
Neo-classical portraits from the early 19th-century.  
Crawford Art Gallery, Cork.  
[www.crawfordartgallery.ie](http://www.crawfordartgallery.ie)

**Sarah Pierce: Pathos of Distance**

Until 1 May  
Telling the story of Irish migrants through art.  
National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.  
[www.nationalgallery.ie](http://www.nationalgallery.ie)

# FRESH PAINT

INSPIRING NEW ARTWORKS, STRAIGHT OFF THE EASEL

## SUSAN ANGHARAD WILLIAMS

Still life painters often like to fill their studios with potential subjects in the hopes that one day they will complete a composition and make everything just so. Occasionally, however, a beautiful object can prove impossible to slot into a composition – as was the case with Susan

Angharad Williams and a silk dress covered in poppies. “I had been longing to use this in a still life painting for some time,” says the Kent-based artist, who was drawn to the colour of the flowers and texture of the fabric. “It belonged to a friend who could remember wearing it when she was young. Frustratingly, nothing worked, but it remained an ambition and continued to tantalise me.”

It took the purchase of an Adams cup to finally find the perfect setting for the dress. Susan felt her way into the composition by drawing it on A1 Arches paper, before transferring it to the canvas. She roughly drew the main elements with thinned Burnt Umber, before blocking in the colour. “I first focused upon the cup, concentrating on the brightness of the white and blue shapes of the figures. When I had established this base, I painted the freesias.”

The crisp, fresh finish was then achieved with linear strokes and small, pointed sable brushes. “I apply the oil

paint in thin layers, gradually building up the density and saturation of colour.”

The creased paper proved an exciting challenge for Susan. “The structure and geometry of my paintings are of major importance to me,” she explains. “Finding the planes in the creases and folds was a way of intensifying this geometry – comparing one plane to the next, its relation to the direction of the light determined its colour and tone.”

Susan’s interest in what she calls “spatial realism” dates back to her days at the Royal College of Art, where she studied under Peter Blake and graduated with distinction in 1969. Pursuing what she calls a “deeply unfashionable” interest, she was encouraged by others to compromise her art but resisted and withdrew.

The Glamorgan-born artist continued to paint and draw in the interim, but it wasn’t until she featured in the 2006 *Welsh Artist of the Year* exhibition in Cardiff that she finally stepped back into the public spotlight. Is there a sense, we wonder, that she feels the need to make up for lost time?

“No one has ever asked me this before,” she says, before adding firmly: “Yes, definitely – I am very conscious of it.”

**Susan’s next solo exhibition is on the Jonathan Cooper stand at The BADA Fair 2016, which runs from 9-15 March at Duke of York Square, London SW3. [www.susanangharadwilliams.co.uk](http://www.susanangharadwilliams.co.uk) >**

### TOP TIP

Susan prefers a fine linen canvas: “I like the slightly irregular, textured surface it provides”

**RIGHT** Susan Angharad Williams, *Freesias, Poppy Dress and the Adams Cup*, oil on linen, 56x47cm







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## PETER CLOSSICK

While all of the artworks we feature in Fresh Paint are hot off the easel, perhaps none of them look quite as vivid and boxfresh as Peter Clossick's *Summer Solstice*.

The former London Group president is a man seemingly in love with paint as both a substance and a subject, so oils are generously applied in a series of confident, purposeful strokes. Similarly, the colours are drawn from all corners of

his palette, yet appear to sing in harmony and discord with one another across the course of the vast canvas.

"The best tip for clean colour is to wash your brushes out between mixtures and try not to put more than three colours at a time together," explains Peter. "I understand that [early 20th-century Expressionist painter Chaim] Soutine, who also worked with impasto, had anything up to 40 brushes on the go at once. Above all, it is really about common sense not theory."

Peter's approach is just as instinctive. *Summer Solstice* is his second attempt at this particular motif – a back garden swing built for his three-year-old grandson. He worked to resolve the composition on the canvas, pushing it in a new direction this time around. "The triangulated form of the swing is a shape I found satisfying as it provides a moment of rest within the structure of the rectangle – and, of course, it reminds me of my grandson."

The revision paid off. *Summer Solstice* is one of six paintings shortlisted for this year's *Columbia Threadneedle Prize*, one of the most challenging and lucrative fine art awards. At 67, Peter is a veteran of many major prize exhibitions – not least the *Threadneedle* itself in 2009 and 2012 – but he still relishes the opportunity to be involved.

"Exhibitions like the *Columbia Threadneedle Prize* are very important, as there are very few figurative competitions to enter of that quality," he says. "The fact of getting your work into the exhibition means that it will be seen by the wide audience that regularly attends the Mall Galleries, plus the whole affair is conducted with great professionalism, by the organisers and their staff. It is a privilege to be involved."

***Columbia Threadneedle Prize 2016 runs from 3-20 February at the Mall Galleries, London SW1. [www.peterclossick.com](http://www.peterclossick.com)*** >



**LEFT** Peter Clossick,  
*Summer Solstice*,  
oil on canvas,  
164x135cm





## TOP TIP

Peter won't pinpoint a location in the title of a painting: "It may sway a prospective buyer"

## PETER WIGLEY

Portfolio Plus member Peter Wigley took early retirement in 1995 but it was another six years before he picked up a paintbrush. He began with watercolour classes ("It was my wife's idea!") but soon turned to oils and acrylics after going out sketching with Derbyshire painter Rex Preston. "Rex taught me a great many things," says Peter. "I learned to use a painting knife and be more abstract and looser in style. Painting is a hobby really but a very rewarding one in many ways. My great regret is the late start."

The artist is making up for lost time now. His latest works are based upon images discovered during an annual holiday to North Wales last summer. During the stay, Peter and his wife walked part of the Afon Dwyfor river, near Llanystumdwy. "It was a wonderful bright day and the light

was perfect," says the artist, who photographed a host of potential subjects en route. *River Bank* was worked up from these at a later date. He chose a limited palette of acrylics, but modified the colours by greying the mixes with complementary hues and applying a series of thin glazes. The fast-flowing river was emulated using a palette knife to shape the paint, which was fortified with a texture medium.

The area not only inspired the subject but also the approach. "The art in North Wales has been a great inspiration to me, very vibrant and expressive," he says. "I suppose this is Kyffin Williams and William Selwyn's influence. David Grosvenor's work is amazing too."

**Sign up for your own personalised Portfolio Plus account today at [www.artistsandillustrators.co.uk/register](http://www.artistsandillustrators.co.uk/register) or visit Peter's own page at [www.artistsandillustrators.co.uk/peter-wigley](http://www.artistsandillustrators.co.uk/peter-wigley)**

**ABOVE** Peter Wigley, *River Bank*, acrylic on canvas, 65x65cm



A large, vibrant painting of water lilies in various shades of blue, green, and pink, with reflections on the water.

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Claude Monet, *Water Lilies* (detail), 1914-15. Oil on canvas, 190.3 x 190.3 cm, Portland Art Museum, Oregon, inv. 59.18.  
Helen Thurston Ayer Fund. Photo © Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon. Exhibition co-organised by the Royal  
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# GET REAL!

REALISTIC WORKS OF ART TAKES PATIENCE, PLANNING AND PLENTY OF SKILL. THE ARTISTS BEHIND 13 JAW-DROPPINGLY VIVID PAINTINGS REVEAL HOW THEY BROUGHT THEM TO LIFE

## OLIVER C JONES

**This Shropshire-born artist explores our culture of perfectionism through his immaculate photorealist art**

"*Take off the Mask* is part of an on-going project on beauty advertising campaigns and how flesh exists in the media. I exhibited the series in Los Angeles last year. These are images that we are used to, but when you see it in a gallery, it can become quite ambiguous. People are going to sit and interrogate it more than a photograph.

"I am using pastels as opposed to paint at the moment because the way they are applied is the same way you'd apply make-up, like foundation – you're using more gestural, rounded strokes. I use very bare outlines and then it is a case of layering almost transparent layers of the pastel. Unison is my favourite brand, they have a useful thickness to them. They work really well as, unlike paint, you're not going to lose the integrity of the last colour that you put on. It helps to build a base and body of shape. Pastel works best on top of pastel, rather than trying to fight the tooth of the paper. Once you fill that tooth in, you can start mixing on the page. If you use a hard compressed pastel, it tends to fill the paper up quicker, without becoming too thick.

"The source image was shot in a studio first, and the finished composition was very similar. I don't stray too far from what I think works as an image. By doing this, I bypass the stage where I have to draw it out 500 times to find out what is going to work on canvas. I don't like working from a computer screen, it has to be the physical print out. It's framed very plainly, like she's in a Perspex box, so nothing but the sitter and the subject of the picture is important.

"The model for *Take off the Mask* was actually my wife, Georgina. She hasn't told me what she thinks of it."

[www.olivercjones.com](http://www.olivercjones.com)

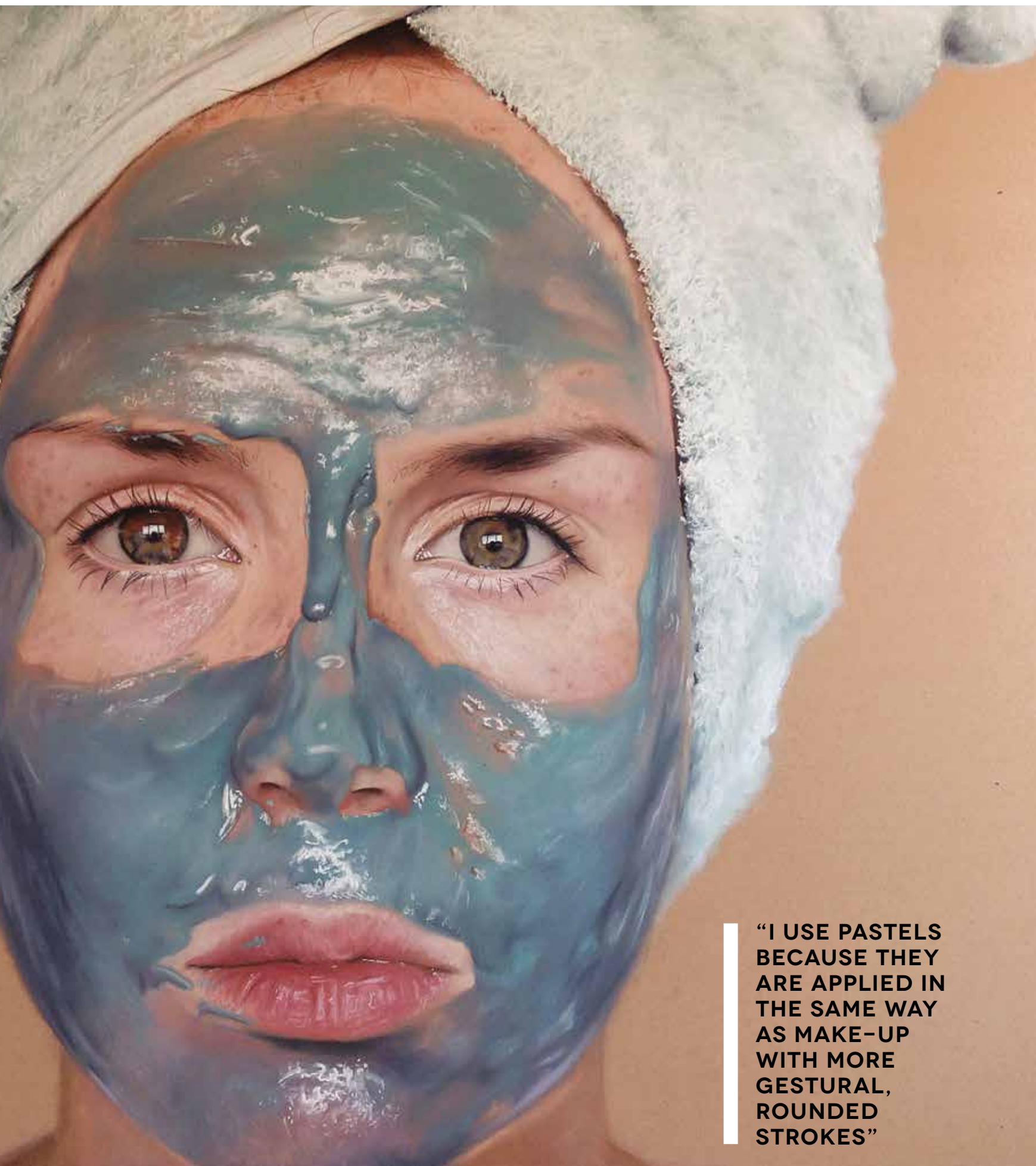
## TIP

Oliver relies on natural lighting as much as possible when photographing his subjects

**RIGHT** Oliver C Jones, *Take off the Mask*, pastel on paper, 122x91.5cm







**"I USE PASTELS  
BECAUSE THEY  
ARE APPLIED IN  
THE SAME WAY  
AS MAKE-UP  
WITH MORE  
GESTURAL,  
ROUNDED  
STROKES"**





## PATRICK KRAMER

**A self-proclaimed perfectionist by nature, this American painter likes to tackle a variety of hyperreal subjects**

"My photography skills are pretty limited. I took a basic photography class in college, having learned just enough through trial and error to suit my needs. I would say I'm a lot more confident with Photoshop than I am with a camera, and I use it pretty extensively in my compositions.

"When I'm happy with the way an image looks on the computer, I print off a photo and use that as reference, although lately I've been using my screen directly as the colours on my Apple MacBook's display are more vivid.

"In college, I forced myself to draw and paint a variety of imagery, as I wanted to be able to accurately render anything in front of me, regardless of the subject. I never wanted to fall into formulas: 'this is how you paint grass' or 'these are the colours you mix for skin tones'. Choosing a variety of subjects kept me on my toes, forcing me to really paint what my eyes saw, not what I thought I knew.

"Working smaller is easier for me to manage, as there is less paint to mix and I don't have to shift the painting around the easel. This does require tiny brushes (5/0 is my smallest) and they tend to wear out quickly, so I'm always

buying new ones. I buy my brushes from a variety of manufacturers. I tend to use cheaper ones as I'm fairly hard on them. In the past, I've used magnifying glasses to help achieve near microscopic detail, but I rarely work that tight any more.

"I'm not very particular about my tools or materials. I've been using Utrecht oils lately as they are fairly economical. I previously used cotton canvas, but had a few frustrating experiences with sagging due to changes in humidity so I've recently started using a polyester-cotton blend from Fredrix, which is more resistant to changes in climate.

"My approach to painting is pretty universal. I don't really think in terms of whether the subject is solid or liquid, matte or shiny, and so on. I just paint what I see, and focus on shape, value and colour. I will usually pick a particular colour range, then mix my paint on my palette, making five or six swatches of a colour, ranging from dark to light. I'll do this for each of the main colours I plan on using that day.

"I paint pretty thinly, with just enough paint to cover the canvas, generally working from dark to light. I apply broad strokes of colour first, gradually refining and blending, smoothing out brushstrokes as I progress. I ignore most details, saving subtleties for subsequent layers."

[www.patrickkramerart.com](http://www.patrickkramerart.com)

**ABOVE** Patrick Kramer, *The Optimist and the Pessimist*, oil on canvas, 81x122cm  
**RIGHT** Patrick Kramer, *Pirouette*, oil on canvas, 76x61cm

## 3 STEPS TO BETTER REALIST PAINTING

### 1. LEARN TO DRAW WELL

"I would advise people who want to paint realistically to first learn to draw well. When they've gained a good understanding of value, proceed to monochromatic painting.

### 2. PAINT IN MONOCHROME

"The hardest part about achieving realism in painting is having a solid understanding of value. Doing a monochromatic underpainting helps me to establish values before worrying about colour."

### 3. GRADUALLY ADD COLOUR

"I don't try to get colour perfect in the first layer, just close enough. In subsequent layers I can really fine-tune things, making subtle colour and value adjustments that could never be achieved in one pass."





**“CHOOSING  
A VARIETY OF  
SUBJECTS KEPT  
ME ON MY TOES,  
FORCING ME TO  
REALLY PAINT  
WHAT MY EYES  
SAW, NOT WHAT  
I THOUGHT  
I KNEW”**



## SAMUEL SILVA

**This 33-year-old Portuguese hobby artist reveals his painstaking technique using just nine ballpoint pens**

"Back when I was six years old my mum used to tell me that real artists have attained such astonishing skill that they need no tracing, grids or artificial means to recreate nature as they please. As a consequence of those words, I felt as if using grids was dishonest and I followed the reverse path to that of most people: I learned how to accurately draw proportions, without grids first.

"After more than 20 years I decided to start using grids as a means to save time. I just draw some key features, very rudimentary, very faint, most people wouldn't even call them outlines, because in reality they are more like visual coordinates: eyes go here, chin goes there, and so on. Everything else is drawn using visual judgment. Some people may ask why I waste so much time but it is my hobby and you learn a lot by not taking short cuts.

"I like to use thick and smooth paper. I work on multiple areas of the drawing at the same time with multiple colours and sometimes on the whole page with just one colour. Layering with ballpoint pen is very unforgiving and if you miss one layer the final colour will be wrong and there is no way you can fix that except for starting over.

"Contrary to what people think, I very rarely use dots. I also hold the pens like I would for writing. The problem with ballpoint pens is that the ink is on the surface of a

**"FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF TEXTURES, I CROSS-HATCH MINISCULE, VERY LIGHTLY APPLIED LINES OF BALLPOINT PEN INK"**

**BELOW** Samuel Silva, *Redhead Girl*, ballpoint pen on paper, 22.5x20cm

sphere, so the amount of ink is limited. To get more ink on the sphere you need to roll the pen to the side and that will definitely not create a dot. The solution would be to stipple three or four dots, roll the pen on a scrap piece of paper and draw another three or four. Ultimately, that would be too time consuming, even for me.

"For the vast majority of textures, I cross-hatch minuscule, very lightly applied lines. When you are only using eight colours plus black but you have

hundreds of hues to recreate, this poses a serious problem to your mind. You have to think very carefully what those colours will be because getting one of them wrong in a sequence of sometimes six layers will ruin everything.

"Drawing the lightly-coloured, shiny hairs on top of layers of darker hair was the trickiest part of *Redhead Girl*. There are no true white ballpoint pens (gel pens don't count as they are water-based and their ink dissolves and smudges ballpoint pen ink), so you have to draw around every single object you want to look lighter than the background. With hair, this involves creating grids upon even tinier grids of every shape you can imagine which you then have to fill one by one, patiently, without going over a single hair with the pen, or you'll ruin the effect.

[www.facebook.com/vianaarts](http://www.facebook.com/vianaarts)

## 3 TIPS FOR DRAWING IN BIRO

### 1. BUILD IN LAYERS

"Ballpoint pen ink is fairly translucent. With the appropriate amount of layering of two colours together, you can achieve a fairly wide range of hues. Not only that but depending on how much you layer a single colour, like yellow, you can get everything from a very light yellow to effectively orange."

### 2. DON'T TRY TO ERASE

"Ballpoint pen ink is absorbed by the paper and dries almost instantly so it is virtually impossible to erase without seriously damaging the paper. I either improvise and turn a mistake into something else which has a similar shape and colour, or I throw the drawing away."

### 3. BE (VERY) PATIENT

"Sometimes I have to stop drawing for two or three days just to think about how to solve some problems because I honestly have no idea how to achieve some effects with so many medium restrictions."







## CYNTHIA POOLE

The Zimbabwean artist loves to paint well-loved brands

"How to Eat Beans is one of a series of multi-part paintings. It took me a while to arrange the composition convincingly, as each of the four images needed to relate across the divisions but also stand alone as smaller paintings.

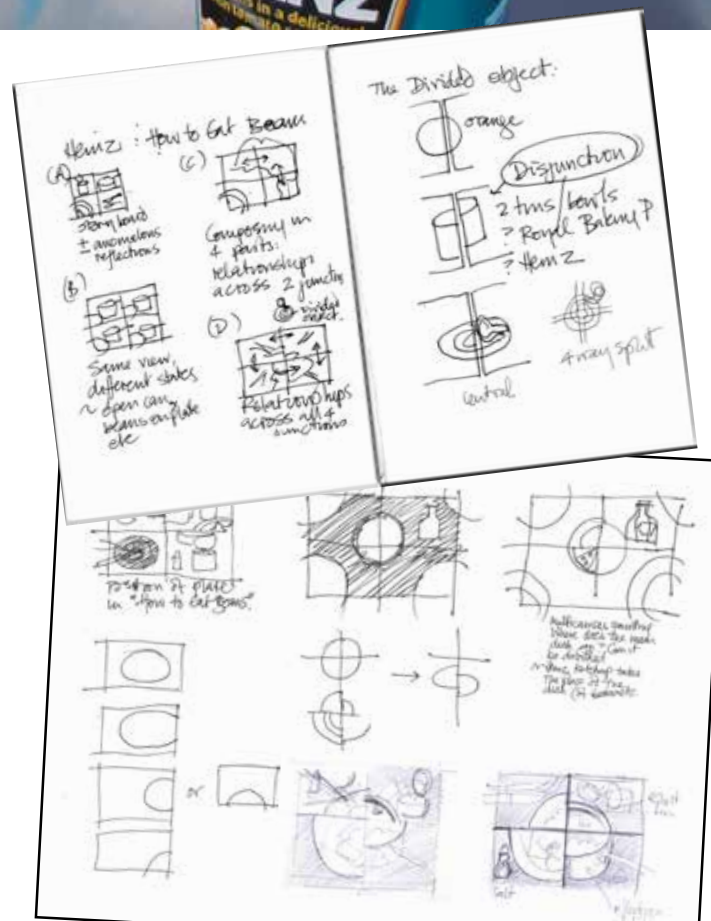
"A lot of sketching and scribbling is followed by selecting particular objects and then maybe a few initial photos to see if they work together. After that, lengthy photo sessions arranging these objects until I more or less have what I want, followed by more tweaking on the computer. Then comes careful drawing and blocking in on the canvas.

"I mostly use Winsor & Newton or Liquitex Heavy Body acrylics. I tend to avoid earth colours and use the paint pure from the tube where I can. I work opaque and use quite a lot of white in the mix, building up several layers to make the colours dense. One of the challenges with acrylic is that it dries extremely fast, even when using a retarder, so it is difficult to blend. However, the fast drying time also means that you can use low-tack masking tape or lay airbrush film directly onto the previously painted surface."

[www.cynthiapooole.co.uk](http://www.cynthiapooole.co.uk)

>

ABOVE Cynthia Poole, *How to Eat Beans*, acrylic on linen, 180x140cm  
RIGHT Cynthia's initial thumbnail sketches for *How to Eat Beans*







## JAVIER BANEAGAS

**This Spanish artist uses oil paints to recreate the objects that surround him in his studio each day**

"In my paintings, tools and materials are recurring themes. There are earlier works in which these coloured paint pots [seen in *Color Skyline II*, above] are grouped together in different ways, often as part of a composition in which more objects appear. Through these older works comes the idea of giving prominence to one object in particular, enlarging the maximum scale to give it centre stage.

"I think that my paintings tend to be based on a mental image, which is reached by different efforts. There isn't an act of creation that starts from zero, one job leads to another, the pictures will happen and so an idea is generated on which to develop a series of paintings. After starting from the reality, I begin to take hundreds of photographs to get what I want.

"Once the mental image is clear, it's difficult to adjust reality to the idea being pursued. In that sense, digital

photography allows hundreds of tests to achieve the desired result.

"A realistic painting requires a pre-planned approach to drawing that can be reached by using many techniques, from a grid scale to mathematical proportionality. In the end what must be clear at the time of painting it is that drawing is only an aid that can be undone and redone at any time. The paint should not be set to a shape, almost the opposite – form should *emerge* from the painting.

"In the painting style I've developed in recent years, it has been essential to use photography in order to have a clear, static model so I can size-up the object that I want to paint. This is the main benefit of using photography, but also its main drawback as it is not about reproducing a photographic image. In all my pictures of objects, like the coloured pots or pencil shavings, there is also a pointed reference to the human hand behind it.

"My coloured paint pots, which happen to be glass, are especially interesting to me because they are the materials with which I have worked with, and are well-used and so

**ABOVE** Javier Banegas, *Color Skyline II*, oil on panel, 85x190cm





the stained glass is coloured. It's a reality that belongs to me because it's around me, I've lived with and used these objects, they've accompanied me through my painting process.

"For me there's not only paint, there is the analysis of form, of chiaroscuro, nuances and interrelation of colour between objects, there is an interpretation of reality and above all, of feeling and emotion.

"It is true that when one looks at realistic painting, especially through a computer screen, the impression is that we are faced with a photograph, but if we have the opportunity to see one of these paintings in real life, we will immediately realise that it is much more. In the painting, the footprint of the human being who created it is more or less visible. It is his thought, his emotion; through the strokes we can understand his indecision, his certainties and his passion. I am not interested in sacrificing this 'footprint' for the sake of a photorealistic quality."

Javier's next solo exhibition runs from 10 February to 5 March at Plus One Gallery, London SW1. [www.javierbanegas.jimdo.com](http://www.javierbanegas.jimdo.com) >

## 4 TIPS FOR PHOTOREALISTIC OILS

### 1. TAKE YOUR TIME

"Oil painting offers endless possibilities for hyperrealistic painting, mainly due to the density of the colours. As they are slow-drying, oils enable you to work in the moment and adapt your approach."

### 2. FOCUS ON THE SURFACE

"Oils will allow you to introduce subtle impasto or make transparent veils of colour on the painting's surface, which can give delicate nuances to the work."

### 3. EMBRACE SIMPLICITY

"Painting maintains a significant role in recording permanence of emotion and memory. I avoid creating spectacular photorealistic images to create the objects that encapsulate us."

### 4. DON'T BE AFRAID TO INTRODUCE LAYERS

"Overlapping layers when using oils can be very effective. You can work in this mode both wet-on-wet or wet-on-dry, but Javier advises using a fast-drying medium for the latter approach."





### 1. MAPPING OUT

The outline and tones are drawn in Light Red with a size 3 brush



### 2. BLOCKING IN

Opaque colours are used to paint each koi's key shapes



### 3. SCALING UP

Details are added, taking care to match the curve of every fish

## PETER GOODHALL

**This Portfolio Plus member combines his love of watery subjects and detailed brushwork in his latest fishy series**

"This is the fifth painting in my *Koi Anticipation* series. The paintings are put together from many photographs and it wouldn't be unusual for a painting of 15 fish to have developed from 15 different photos. The compositions are constructed around a few key fish placed in prominent positions and the spaces left evolve by selecting fish from other photos that meet the criteria of interest, angle and light. The entire composition is mapped out with a size 3 brush using just Light Red and turps on a white oil ground.

"Once the design was complete, all of the fish were under-painted with a selection of fairly opaque colours – some favourites at this stage include Michael Harding's Yellow Ochre Deep, Cadmium Yellow and Cadmium Red, Vasari's Video Blue Extra Pale and Sennelier's Blue Grey. I then cover the water with Lamp Black and Prussian Blue. After that it's a systematic process of painting each fish.

"A single fish can take up to a day at a time to finish because I use ridiculously small brushes given the large size of my canvases. I'm most comfortable painting with a size 5, short-handled pointed brush.

"The painting of the scales begins with a geometric pattern that is then built up one by one, making sure that each scale is painted to show the slightly raised curvature. The aim is to work towards using colours that are more transparent to combine sheen with depth of hue.

"I rarely use any additional medium, relying on the more oily consistency of transparent paints to facilitate the modelling of the colour. If there is a need to boost the glow of a colour, I tend to use Michael Harding's Oleo-Resin Medium. My favourite colour for painting the gold koi is Old Holland's Indian Yellow Orange Lake Extra, sometimes used with a splash of Flake White, as it creates fantastic and vibrant yellows. For warming colours and darkening reds, Mineral Violet works well."

[www.artistsandillustrators.co.uk/petergoodhall](http://www.artistsandillustrators.co.uk/petergoodhall)

## TIP

Know your subject. "It's easy to copy a photo but you have to have something to add, says Peter"

**BELOW** Peter Goodhall, *Koi Anticipation V*, oil on canvas, 122x72cm







## FRANCOIS CHARTIER

**A career in advertising helped this Canadian artist develop his airbrush skills with magical results**

"Lighting can make or break a picture, so I spend a lot of time playing with lights and the set up. I use the various levels, contrasts and anything else the computer can give me to bring more drama to my image. Photorealism is very organised and planned, rather than intuitive. I spend a lot of time preparing my photos – more so than I spend on the actual oil painting.

"In order to get the correct information on the painting, it is important to make sure you have it on the reference photo. I use a Nikon D800 camera that gives me a very precise photograph. I will then print the image to size, section by section, on smaller sheets of paper and then use that to help trace the image onto the canvas.

**ABOVE** François Chartier, *Minerva*, oil on canvas, 152x152cm

"After the tracing is done, my work is divided in two parts. The first involves working on one small area at a time and bringing it as close to completion as I can, keeping the work as clean as possible. At this stage I'm more interested in all the little details. The second part involves glazing over the areas that need to be unified to ensure that the colour and tonal balance is even across the whole painting.

"By using a small palette it make this second step easier. I like Winsor Newton Artists' Oil Colours and I mix them with Liquin to shorten the drying times. My palette includes just Permanent Rose, French Ultramarine, Winsor Yellow, Winsor Blue (Green Shade), Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber and Yellow Ochre. I will sometimes add an extra colour if needed. Using Liquin means that some areas are shinier than others, so I use Liquitex's Soluvar Gloss Varnish at the end to unify the painting and give it a nice finish."

[www.francoisc.com](http://www.francoisc.com)

>



## GREGORY THIELKER

**Raindrops on a windscreen provide a tricky technical challenge for this American hyperrealist painter**

*“Complete Stop is part of a series of works titled *Under the Unminding Sky*. I developed the idea for the series while en route to other painting sites. I found myself looking out of the car and noticing that the movement through the environment could be a strange and captivating subject. Inside the car, we both move through the environment, while remaining separate from it. Rain on the windscreen interrupts this view, turning the windscreen into a fluid lens. I thought it was a way to make an image about painting itself and its role as a window into another kind of space.*

*“I take photographs while driving in the rain and I search for images that have a strong composition and colour, and also provide new challenges as an artist. That being said, most of the paintings in this series are actually based upon composite images. I work on Photoshop to edit and refine the image so that in the end the painting is no longer connected to a single photo reference.*

*“I use many different methods for sketching out an image, depending on the complexity and scale I need. Since most of the image is planned out on the computer, I have a good sense of how it will turn out. An under-painting is crucial for*

**“I TAKE PHOTOS WHILE DRIVING IN THE RAIN AND I SEARCH FOR IMAGES THAT HAVE A STRONG COMPOSITION AND COLOURS, AND ALSO PROVIDE NEW CHALLENGES AS AN ARTIST”**

me, not only to plan out values but also to build a foundation of pigment. Most of the painting involved five to six layers of paint, going from general to very specific.

*“In terms of brushes, in recent years I’ve turned more and more towards strong yet supple sables, although the beginning layers also can be done with hog hairs. In the US where I live, sables are becoming harder and harder to find, so I have to turn to mongoose or other stronger synthetics.*

*“For an oil painting such as this, I will mix all of my colours at the beginning of the day, so they are fresh. Sometimes this takes an hour or more. If I have a long day in the studio, I might do this again in the afternoon. At the end of the day, all of the semi-dry paint gets scraped off and thrown away.*

*“The paintings in this series require certain contrasts in order for marks and colours to be distinctive – the vibration of saturated reds over muted greys, for example, or curvilinear drips against rectangular forms. This helps to create variety, guiding the viewer’s eye around the painting. For *Complete Stop*, the saturated chromatic reds needed to*

**ABOVE RIGHT**  
Gregory Thielker,  
*Complete Stop*,  
oil on canvas,  
91x122cm



be built up over several layers. I also used several different brushes at the same time – it’s possible for me to have four different brushes going for a single hue shift. The most satisfying parts are where those colours really start to stand out.

**Gregory’s exhibition, *Between Here and Now*, runs from 5 March to 2 April at Castor Gallery, New York. [www.gregorythielker.com](http://www.gregorythielker.com) >**





### 3 TIPS FOR STRIKING COLOURS

#### 1. PREPARE COLOURS FIRST

Try mixing all the colours you intend to use at the start of a session. Gregory sets aside the first hour to create fresh, fluid mixes on his palette before work begins on the canvas.

#### 2. USE MULTIPLE BRUSHES

Avoid larger colour shifts becoming muddy by using a separate brush for each stage of the mix. "I often have four different brushes going for a single hue shift," says Gregory.

#### 3. JUXTAPOSE FOR IMPACT

Some colours only stand out when contrasted with those around them. Gregory cites the silver-blue skies of French painter Camille Corot as a great example of this.





## TIP

Oscar uses bright colours across his whole canvas to keep the composition cohesive

### OSCAR LAKEMAN

**This American artist has used an airbrush and his fingers to create more than 600 large-scale paintings of paint**

No one is more surprised than I am that I have painted more than 600 *Container* paintings. I painted the first one in 1984 and had no idea what I was getting into. The subject matter keeps evolving, an ever-changing mess right in front of me every day.

The paintings have a built-in exuberance and freedom that was part of the original concept of painting paint – I love the stuff. My technique has loosened up over the years; the paintings are more juicy and painterly now. The colours have always reflected my mood and the places I've lived: the city, the mountains and the ocean.

I want all the brushstrokes to be loose and raw. The mash-up of different applications of paint intrigues me:

I use finger painting, paint brushes and an airbrush all together in one piece.

When using so many vibrant colours and distinct elements in a single painting, balance is the key. The *Container* paintings depict a high level of energy and action – things are happening all over the canvas. Maintaining a high level of colour and strength of composition throughout gives the paintings power and cohesiveness.

Muddy colour is the result of too many ingredients and too much overworking. I use a lot of paint on the *Container* paintings – I smear it, throw it, pour it and get it on the canvas any way I can – but at a certain point I stop. A painting loses its freshness and colour if it's over-agitated. [www.oscarlakeman.com](http://www.oscarlakeman.com)

**ABOVE** Oscar Lakeman, *Containers #615*, acrylic on canvas, 122x122cm



## BEN SCHONZEIT

**Each new painting is a failure to the Photorealist veteran**

"People come to me with this idea that I am a photorealist, and that I paint detail. But I don't paint detail. I paint the truth about subjects and colour and light and composition. Being a photorealist is my day job. It involves discipline to work on the same thing for a month. You have a painting that is eight-feet wide, there are technical challenges... It more involves more will than whim.

"You never finish a painting. Every painting is a disappointment. Every painting is a failure. You only abandon it because if you do anymore it is going to kill you. I have to wrestle that monster to the ground and tie it down and make it behave."

This is an extract from *Ben Schonzeit: My Idea of Play* by Kimberly M Wang, available online at [www.benschonzeit.com](http://www.benschonzeit.com)

## TOM MARTIN

**The Huddersfield graduate paints on metal for impact**

"For any one given painting, I may begin with up to say 100 reference images, which would then be reduced to a more manageable amount – say 10-15. I plan out the work on the computer, using image montages and drawings.

"I paint on self-made aluminium panels. A wooden armature is attached to a sheet of aluminium. It is important to ensure I give the raw aluminium a tooth for the primer to adhere too, so I sand it first and then use an etching primer, followed by a gesso primer.

"From there, a drawing is made on the panel in graphite. I apply paint in a variety of ways, from paintbrush to roller to airbrush to mark making. It just depends on what I want to achieve in a section of the work. Primarily most of the paint is laid down with an airbrush, both freehand and using stencils. I use Liquitex acrylics. I know what to expect with the paint, they have a good colour range and are good quality. Maybe I should try other brands, but sometimes you shouldn't fix what isn't broken."

[www.tommartinpaintings.com](http://www.tommartinpaintings.com)

## ANTONIO CASTELLÓ AVILLEIRA

**This Spanish painter blends contemporary and classic**

"I chose these strawberries in the supermarket, one by one, based on their shapes and colours. When harmony appeared in the composition, I started looking at lighting to enhance and add volume to the elements; that's when I took the picture. I began drawing the structure and gradually adding details. For my canvas, I used linen glued on a plywood and added Royal Talens gesso to prepare the surface, applying between seven and eight layers.

"I like to define with pencil before adding paint; I find texture, transparency and luminosity are always difficult to interpret. I achieved the transparency of plastic and light using thin glazes. The most important thing with this style of painting is to be clear on the parts of the composition you want to emphasise with light. The larger the size of the light source, the softer the shadows. You can work with natural or artificial light, but I prefer to use a studio flash."

[www.castelloavilleira.com](http://www.castelloavilleira.com)



**RIGHT, FROM TOP**  
Ben Schonzeit,  
*Carrot Cake*, acrylic  
on polyester,  
152x152cm;  
Tom Martin,  
*Breakfast in the  
21st Century*,  
acrylic on  
aluminium panel,  
120x120cm;  
Antonio Castelló  
Avilleira,  
*Strawberries*, oil on  
linen, 120x120cm









10 MINUTES WITH...

# JANIE PIRIE

NOT CONTENT WITH BEING A DOUBLE RHS GOLD MEDAL WINNER, THIS ESSEX-BASED BOTANICAL PAINTER HAS BEEN NAMED SAA'S PROFESSIONAL PORTRAIT ARTIST OF THE YEAR TOO. INTERVIEW: **STEVE PILL**. PHOTO: **REBECCA BRADBURY**

**Congratulations on being named Portrait Artist of the Year. Given that you are primarily known as a botanical artist, was it nice to get some recognition in a different genre?**

Yes, it was. In fact, I was delighted because I used to do portraits many years ago but my botanical work took over. I've drawn several well-known people in the past, but my favourite was the late Wendy Richard, who was a dear friend. It's lovely to draw people when I have the time. I especially like to draw their eyes and I do these first. If they don't 'speak' to me then there's no point in doing any more.

**Does this mark a shift in subjects for you in 2016?**

Maybe. I still want botanical work to be my main subject as I have a few goals I still wish to aim for. However, if I could become really successful with portrait commissions then perhaps I would change direction for a while.

**You live in Dedham Vale, an area very closely associated with John Constable. Ever tempted to paint the landscape?**

Oh yes. I was such a fan of watercolour when I was younger and used to spend days at a time in the countryside with my paints and brushes. There's something very satisfying about producing a pretty landscape painting in a relatively short time – some of my coloured pencil pieces can take 180 hours to complete.

**You initially juggled a career in PR and marketing with your illustration work. Was it hard to find time for your art?**

It wasn't particularly difficult because I saw any drawing or painting time as a treat. I would work at weekends, in between housework, cooking and piles of laundry. It only became difficult when I had commissions for books or magazines as the pressure of deadlines was always there.

**Did you work in other mediums prior to coloured pencils?**

Yes, I've worked in oils and acrylics in the past. The acrylics were almost forced upon me because I was getting commissions from the major women's magazines and they wanted short stories illustrated in a format that looked like an oil painting. Of course, you have to wait such a long time for oils to dry so acrylic was the obvious answer.

**You've won two RHS gold medals, in 2009 and again in 2014. Which was the most surprising to receive?**

The first. I had won a silver-gilt medal in 2008 and I was very disappointed in myself so I worked tirelessly the following year. I was very pleased with my eight pieces but when I hung them in the RHS area at the NEC I was very

concerned. All the other work was in watercolour and I was fearful that my coloured pencils would be a 'poor relation'.

**Coloured pencil is sometimes an underappreciated medium. Why do you think that is?**

I'm sure it goes way back to 'crayoning' at school when we used to hold the pencil in our fists and just scribble quickly. The quality of pencils has changed so much though – the pigments are of the highest quality, the lightfastness is superb and the colour ranges are amazing. What coloured pencil artists can do now is so beautiful we consider it 'painting with pencils' rather than drawing.

**What is the key to creating a successful botanical artwork?**

Just two words: observation and composition.

**Which other artists have you been inspired by?**

The botanical artists Fiona Strickland and Damodar Lal Gurjar. I don't work in the same way or produce the same style of work, but they inspire me and that inspiration, in turn, helps me to create work of my own.

**When it comes to teaching, do you have a particular philosophy or set of techniques that you focus upon?**

The main focus of my teaching is for the students to enjoy what they are doing. Drawing shouldn't be a chore – it should be fun. With techniques, size and shape are two of the most important things to get right. Details come later.

**You'll be teaching in Tuscany in May. Are there certain subjects you are looking forward to tackling?**

I am really keen for my students to take a good look at the native plants and illustrate them, but there are also some wonderful markets where beautiful fruit, vegetables and herbs can be found, so it is highly likely these will also find their way into the studio. I would also like to find some olive trees, as they should be in bloom then. The one thing I am certain of is that there will be no shortage of subjects.

**Janie's next holiday, *Painting Plants with Coloured Pencils*, runs from 14-21 May at The Watermill at Posara. [www.watermill.net](http://www.watermill.net)**

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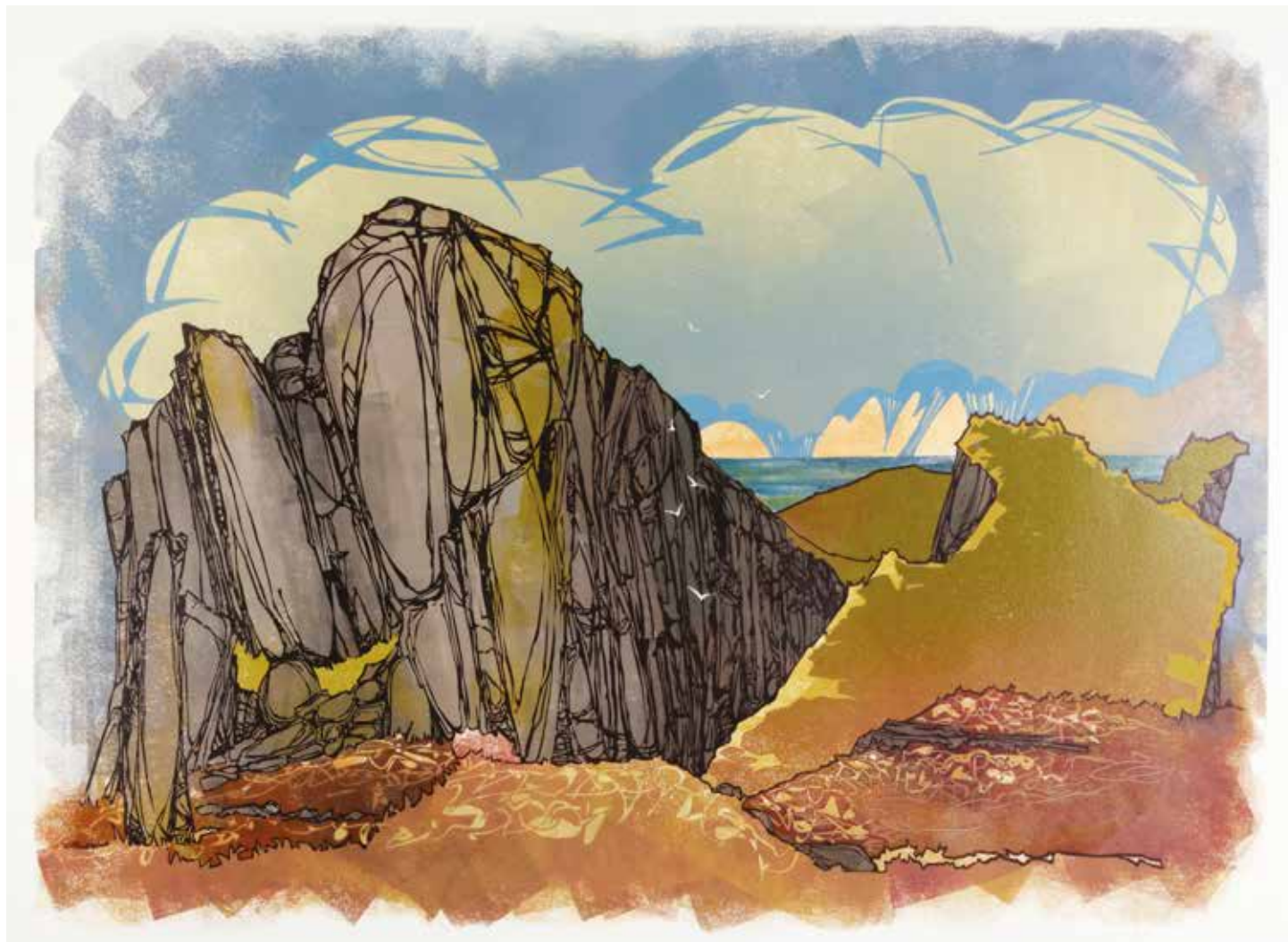
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# THE WORKING ARTIST

WHY DO WE DO WHAT WE DO?

**LAURA BOSWELL** REVEALS WHY THIS IS AN IMPORTANT QUESTION TO ASK



**D**o you ever stop to think about why you create the work you do? The easy answer is “I do it because I love it”. Examine that love a little deeper and you may find more specific and revealing reasons. Understanding your true motivations can help you to become more productive in the precious time that you have to make art.

There are lots of reasons why people make art and it pays to be totally honest. For starters, there are no ‘good’ or ‘bad’ reasons to be creative (though if you have a passion for drawing simply because your sibling is hopeless, it is best not to mention that at family gatherings). Decide what is most important to you: are you keen to learn techniques? Do you want to develop your own artistic voice? Are you out to make money, please a client or see your art hanging in an exhibition? The list of possibilities are many and endless.

For me, it is about testing my skills with tough challenges and selling work to the public. I work best when I am pushing myself technically with new materials or new approaches to my subject, and believing that if I didn’t sell my work, I would cease to make it. That knowledge colours the

projects I plan and the commissions I accept: I know I need to put a new twist on each print with experiments in scale, size, composition or materials. I also know that I need to be pragmatic about the end result: I must factor in the buyer when deciding on subject, edition size, cost and so on.

Your reasons may be different to mine, but identifying them can be so helpful when it comes to planning your next artwork or career step. Remember it is equally valid to simply decide that your main motivation is your own wellbeing and a need to step back and relax. To that end, I recently decided that I would only specialise in linocut and woodblock printmaking going forward. Making that decision was a huge weight off my shoulders. I feel much happier for accepting that I am motivated by honing my existing skills, rather than learning new ones.  
[www.lauraboswell.co.uk](http://www.lauraboswell.co.uk)

“

**UNDERSTANDING  
YOUR TRUE  
MOTIVATIONS CAN  
HELP YOU TO BE  
MORE PRODUCTIVE**

”

**ABOVE** *Rain off the Coast, Scotland*, linocut, 60x45cm



# Wild AT HEART

ON THE EVE OF THE FIRST BRITISH EXHIBITION OF HIS WORK, **LAURA FREEMAN** EXPLORES THE TROUBLED CAREER AND LUSH LANDSCAPES OF ONE OF NORWAY'S FINEST 20TH-CENTURY ARTISTS, **NIKOLAI ASTRUP**

Despite suffering with asthma and weak lungs since childhood, Nikolai Astrup showed a worrying disregard for his health. The Norwegian painter often took himself up into the mountains above Lake Jølster in the evenings to drink moonshine and lie under the rowan bushes, often staying all night on wet and dewy ground. At other times, he went out in the pouring rain to watch the drops leave rings and dimples on the surface of the lake, or trudged through the waterlogged marshy fields next to a neighbour's farm to paint an old barn before it was torn down. He would go out in winter to poke holes through the snow to study the strange 'jingling' colours of the cold glacier water underneath. No wonder his 'wretched' lungs gave him such trouble – he endured a lifelong battle with asthma and tuberculosis. Whenever Nikolai was too ill to go out, he raged at being cooped up and kept from his violet-edged mountains and their mother-of-pearl snowdrifts; from the lake, flecked with marsh marigolds; from willows heavy with catkins; from the alder woods and foxgloves; and from the peculiar copper skies he insisted you only ever saw above a mountain village.

The landscape around Jølster had a powerful effect on the artist. Though born in Bremanger in 1880, his family moved to the small Jølster village of Ålhus when Nikolai was three. Despite studying variously in Kristiania (modern Oslo), Paris and Germany, he settled back in Jølster and painted there until his death in 1928, aged just 47.

For Astrup, the landscape of Vestlandet (western Norway) was the stuff of fairy tales: enchanting and beckoning. As a child, he had been susceptible to what he called 'wood-fire scares'; he once believed he'd seen a horned, violet-grey supernatural animal rear up suddenly from behind a mound. He had been haunted, too, by evil, luminous green eyes seen in the loft of the vicarage and other dark places. Unlike other children, he never grew out of these fantasies and his paintings vividly conjure up the fairy-tale creatures and curious phenomena of his imagination.

In Jølster, Astrup not only saw the streams rushing with spring thaw water, the shepherd girls and 'eternal'



THE SAVINGS BANK FOUNDATION DNB/THE ASTRUP COLLECTION/NODE. BERGEN ART MUSEUM, NORWAY. PHOTO © DAG FOSSE / NODE

wildflowers, but also imagined lumbering trolls bellowing across the valleys, willow goblins fighting to escape the trunks of trees and ice queens sleeping in the mountain gullies. He painted these visions in luminous oils, lit with an otherworldly violet light, full of movement and magic.

His strict and pious father Christian Astrup wanted his eldest son to follow him into the church. It was a grave disappointment, then, for the pastor to find his son playing truant from school to watch the geese in the river on a fine spring day or drawing on the backs of his school tests.

Nikolai's childhood sketchbooks are pasted edge to edge with scraps of drawings – some the size of postcards, some no larger than thumbnails – of carthorses and cockerels, troll crags and dairymaids' bonnets, Jølster rowboats and Norse warriors with their maidens. His grades in Latin,





meanwhile, were dismal. “[My father] is so bitter, about the fact that I wish to become a painter,” wrote the 18-year-old in a letter to his friend, Arne Giverholt, “that he says he would rather see me as the simplest craftsman (as a shoemaker, say), than see me become something of the kind.”

Living at his father’s parsonage with its damp walls, draughty rooms and mildew, the artist kept his spirits up with designs for tapestries and decorations for a wooden arch for a local wedding which he painted with rosehip branches and pink buds. In the same letter to Giverholt, Astrup begged for news: “A little whiff of air from the art

world does reach us as if by pure chance from time to time up here in these backwoods; but it is not enough for us to survive on throughout the long gloomy winter season.”

Yet survive he did. By the following year, Nikolai had moved to Kristiania, studying first at the Royal College of Art and Design, where he discovered printmaking, and later as a private pupil of the landscape painter Harriet Backer.

By November 1901, the young artist was awarded a scholarship to travel to Germany and then on to Paris where he would delight in the art of Paul Gauguin, Henri Rousseau and the Japanese printmaker Katsushika

**ABOVE** Nikolai Astrup, *Midsummer Eve Bonfire*, 1915, oil on canvas, 136x196cm

## FOR NIKOLAI ASTRUP, THE LANDSCAPE OF WESTERN NORWAY WAS THE STUFF OF FAIRY TALES: ENCHANTING AND BECKONING





THE SAVINUS BANK FOUNDATION DNB / THE ASTRUP COLLECTION / KODE. BERGEN ART MUSEUM, NORWAY. PHOTO © DAG FOSSE / KODE

## ASTRUP HAD NO TIME FOR COLOUR THEORY... HE WANTED TO PAINT LIKE A CHILD “IN A HEALTHY AND NAÏVE WAY”

Hokusai whom, he wrote, “turned my head”. Later in his career, Astrup would develop an innovative and rather painterly approach to printmaking; one of his own woodcuts, *The Big Wave*, owes a debt to Hokusai’s oft-reproduced *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*.

After the stifling atmosphere of the parsonage, the 21-year-old Astrup wrote with rapture of Paris: its cafes aglow with lights, its girls in white pinafores, and its flashy carriages with yellow wheels. In a letter to his friend, the poet Enok Abrahamson, Nikolai announced his plans to spend Christmas smoking his cigarettes out of the window and toasting his good fortune with Champagne, roasted chestnuts and anchovies. Yet having revelled in the delights of Paris for 18 scribbled pages, Astrup ended the letter with a confession of homesickness: “Now I long to return to Norway”.

In the new year Nikolai did just that, settling in Jølster. Here he struck out into the countryside with the resolution to “draw during the day and paint in the evening”. Over the

next decade he would meet and marry Engel Sunde, the daughter of a peasant farmer, while painting and sketching the scenery of Jølster many hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of times.

Through the 1900s, the artist kept diligent notebooks filled with handwriting that jumps and dances above the ruled lines and disappears off the bottom of the page. These ‘Miscellaneous Motif’ books were a hodge-podge of scenes he would like to paint, jottings of childhood memories, and odd commandments explicable only to him. “Watch early in the morning when the girls go to and from the barn (the barn at home) and take the cat along” reads one. Another entry is a memo to draw the cat “in the evenings, when the milk comes and when it has found a mouse [or] baby birds”. The pages of his books are littered with crossings-out and revisions, a lasting indication of a creatively fertile period in the young artist’s life.

He was particular about colour and sought in his notebooks to describe the landscape exactly as he had

**TOP LEFT** Nikolai Astrup, *Marsh Marigold Night*, c.1915, woodcut on paper, 40.7x47cm  
**ABOVE** Nikolai Astrup, *March Atmosphere at Jølstravatnet*, before 1908, oil on canvas, 75x57cm

PRIVATE COLLECTION, OSLO. PHOTO © ANDERS BERGERSEN





**RIGHT** Nikolai Astrup, *The Parsonage*, date unknown, oil on canvas, 101x88cm

seen it. One entry runs to almost a page as he attempts to capture: “dark almost black slightly olive-green aspen tree trunks... light cold-green trees... black rotten trunks... grey-blue houses with trees around them.... mighty aspen trees, whose light yellow crowns contrast against the background’s heavy yellow birch leaves and the brown-grey-blue and brown-dark hills... the red and blue-toned shifting fog.”

Nikolai had no time for artists who had been ‘spoiled’ by academic colour theories. In a short, undated manifesto he wrote that he wanted to look at Vestlandet “in a healthy and naïve way like ordinary people and children”. He wished

to ‘wash’ himself in the raw colours of western Norway “be they as dirty and heavy or as pure and shrill as they may”.

On a trip to London in 1908 he admired the landscapes of John Constable, but was ‘disappointed’ by JMW Turner, whom, he complained, “paints some pathetic mountains with a peculiar Chinese dragon, which has lost its way... and looks as though it is terrified of falling down”. Astrup’s mountains, in paintings like his *Midsummer Eve Bonfire*, are anything but pathetic, they are like great humpback whales, coloured a vivid blue by the unsetting sun. While his canvases are boldly, vigorously painted, they are never slapdash. As a young man, he had admired the technique of Dutch Golden Age artist Frans Hals whom, he observed, painted “not one false or superfluous brushstroke”.

Astrup is now widely viewed as one of the greatest Norwegian artists of the 20th century, but his paintings did not sell as well as he might have liked during his own lifetime, so he and Engel were often ‘in a great pinch’ for money. “I have a bit of a problem keeping track of money,” he lamented, “but one might say that of most artists.”

Nevertheless, after one of his few successful solo shows, when he had money for new canvas and paints, he would set up his stool in the Jølster fields, painting the landscape he loved, no matter how damp and dewy. He never tired of it. In one of his motif books he made a list of all the views he must paint and having exhaustively listed every corner of the parsonage he could think of (35 in total), he added a final note: “Ask the shoemaker about using his windows.”

Astrup’s thirst for finding new and imaginative ways to render the landscapes, folklore and customs of his beloved Norway has inspired one of the most lush and innovative bodies of work in early 20th century European art.

***Painting Norway: Nikolai Astrup runs from 5 February to 15 May at the Dulwich Picture Gallery, London.***

**[www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk](http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk)**



THE SAVINGS BANK FOUNDATION DNB/THE ASTRUP COLLECTION/KODE, BERGEN ART MUSEUM, NORWAY. PHOTO © DAG FOSSE / KODE



IN THE STUDIO WITH

# OLWYN BOWEY

ON THE EVE OF HER 80TH BIRTHDAY, THE SENIOR ROYAL ACADEMICIAN OPENS THE DOORS TO HER GARDEN STUDIO IN SUSSEX. WORDS AND PHOTOS: ANNE PURKISS



**You are often described as a painter of plants and rural scenes, but how would you describe yourself?**

I'm a professional layabout. I have no patience with just painting in a studio for a gallery. I go where I want and where I'd like to be. I am like Alan Bennett's *The Lady in the Van* – I park somewhere and then I take over, be it the old mill house near Wisborough Green or the greenhouses at West Dean.

**What brought you to Sussex?**

I came here because I was offered use of a cottage and I found much more of what I wanted to paint and more chance of working in situ. I did my old trick of decamping purely for my work and choice of subjects. But I have to say it's taken a long time to get the art and the plants together.

**How well do you know your plants?**

Oh, I know them! I won't go for a walk without knowing anything on the ground that's a plant. It was plants, or rather wild flowers, that were my first interest. There is quite a tradition of artist-plantsmen.

When we had to do a thesis at the end of our course at college, I just automatically did it on plants in paintings through the years.

**Do you still paint from drawings?**

At art school, it was all about good drawing in those days. And when I worked in London, I painted a lot from drawings but I hadn't got the courage to stand out there. I did drawings, and took them home and worked from them, and then went back and did a bit more. I went back and forth. Now, since I came to the country, I'm able to go out on the spot. Mind you, I still see more people than I'd like!

**How do you plan a new painting?**

Once I see something that I think will make a painting, I just look at it and draw it. I'm 'just an eye', as somebody once said. I still like drawing – it's like writing and I like writing letters too. I like the feel of the pen.

**You mentioned in the past that Constable is a big influence on your work. Why is that?**

I like exactly what he liked. He said that it was dirty, rotting old things like fence posts, ponds and sluice gates that made him a painter. And that's what made me a painter too – I know exactly what he meant. That's why abstraction to me is just like doing mathematics. I can't see myself just sitting there painting a pattern.



## WORKING IN SITU

After moving from London to West Sussex, Olwyn often likes to head out and draw *en plein air* in the surrounding countryside.





### **NEST BUILDING**

Olwyn's outhouse is full of potential still life subjects, including taxidermy and baskets. "I like the earthiness of them."



### **GREEN FINGERS**

As well as painting indoors, Olwyn's conservatory doubles as a makeshift studio. The space is filled with plants that often make their way into her paintings.



### **SCHOOL'S OUT**

A photo from Olwyn's Royal College of Art graduation in 1960 with the artist (far right) alongside her future fellow Royal Academician, Sonia Lawson (second left).



**"BEING AN ARTIST ISN'T OF INTEREST... IT'S ONLY A LEAD UP TO LIVING THE WAY YOU WANT TO LIVE"**



**After countless successful solo exhibitions, you are not currently represented by any gallery. Why is that?**

I don't think I could turn out the work for them that they'd need at certain times. If you paint abstract, you can just work in your studio, but with plants, you've got to do them straight away, you can't leave plants, once I've started a painting, I've got to keep on and finish it.

**How has your attitude toward painting changed over the years?**

When I was at the Royal College of Art, John Nash was teaching there, and he said his interests were gardening, fishing and painting – in that order. And I knew what he meant. The actual act of painting and being an artist isn't of great interest. It's only a lead up to getting the way you want to live. For me it still is.

Now I've got to this age, I know I'm not that interested in success. I'll keep myself busy now, quite happily doing what I want.

**Where would be your ideal place in which to live and work?**

I'd like to find somewhere like the Lost Gardens of Heligan and have a house in the corner. It would have to be a reasonably modern, easy-to-run house. And I'd have all the stuff that I wanted to paint on the doorstep. That's what I'd like.

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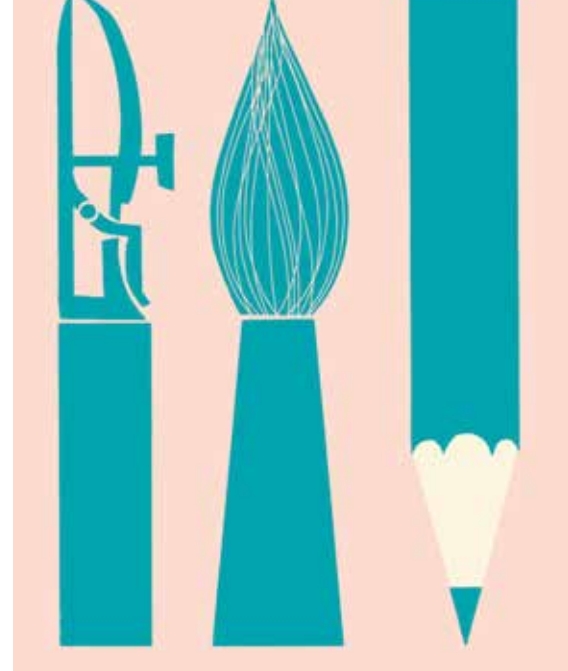
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# MARCH

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## ON TEST

MICHAEL HARDING

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### WARM WHITE, NO. 137

Michael Harding says...

"My contribution to artists who want a lead-like paint without the lead content."

**Our verdict...** Classically-trained oil painters still pining for the banned Lead White should immediately investigate this creamy yet equally opaque alternative. The addition of Yellow Iron Oxide provides a very subtle, sunny glow to mixes at all corners of the palette.

### WARM LIGHT YELLOW, NO. 226

Michael says... "Perfect for mixing colours [and] using in portraits, landscapes and non-figurative works."

**Our verdict...** Though pre-mixed from the same three pigments as Warm White, there is a peachy tint to this particular colour that makes it an ideal base for softer, fleshy hues. Despite the low oil content, it brushes on smoothly too.

### ALIZARIN CLARET, NO. 310

Michael says... "I specifically formulated this beautiful, full-bodied colour for those artists who are afraid to use Alizarin Crimson."

**Our verdict...** Though never fearful of Crimson, it can overpower a mix. This almost like-for-like substitute is slightly lighter in tone and blends more pleasingly, particularly for putting colour in the cheeks of your next portrait.





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## BRUSHING UP: VARNISH BRUSHES

A GUIDE FROM THE WORLD'S LEADING BRUSH MANUFACTURER, **ROSEMARY THOMPSON**

It's tempting to avoid spending on a decent varnishing brush when any old large brush will do the job, but I'd argue that because you're using them on the final stage of a painting, it's worth the investment.

Decent varnish brushes won't wear down easily and will have a tight groove that prevents reflection where you don't want it. Look for a soft brush with some spring – you need to know the hairs won't fall out.

Cleaning a varnish brush thoroughly is also very important – if you don't, varnish can seep up the bristles, dry out and then flake off next time you use it. I recommend soaking your brush in mineral spirits and using a comb to clean out the bristles. Once you are sure the varnish is removed, clean with soap or detergent, rinse well and leave to dry.

[www.rosemaryandco.com](http://www.rosemaryandco.com)

## HOW TO DRAW FABRIC

**JAKE SPICER** SHARES AN ORDERLY APPROACH TO TRICKY FOLDS



- 1 Draw the fabric's outline with a 2B pencil.** Next, draw the most prominent creases. Keep your marks fluid and ignore any smaller creases.



- 2 Sketch in the pattern on the fabric.** Be careful to draw only what you observe, not what you expect to see.

**TOP TIP**  
Establish a clear order: outlines first, creases next, patterns last



- 3 Lightly erase pencil lines and emphasise with pen.** Recognise abstract shapes and find marks that capture the fabric's character.

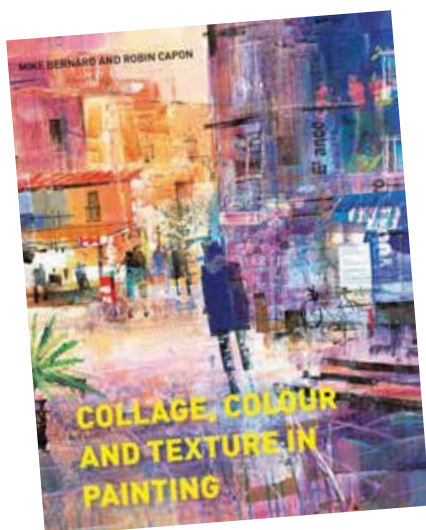


- 4 Add an ink wash to the lighter mid-tones.** Keep the lightest areas white and build up your tones using the earlier lines as scaffolding.



- 5 Add darker ink washes for the darker tones.** Leave the darkest shadows in the creases of the fabric until last. This will allow you to re-establish the structure in your drawing.

Jake's new book, *DRAW*, is published by Ilex Press, RRP £17.99. [www.jakespicerart.co.uk](http://www.jakespicerart.co.uk)



## BOOK OF THE MONTH

*Collage, Colour and Texture in Painting*

**Mike Bernard and Robin Capon**

A new paperback edition of this 2010 mixed media bible gives in-depth explanations of every step of the process, from thumbnail sketches to final textures. As well as introducing useful techniques and rules of thumb to follow, the authors also put emphasis on developing your confidence and working with happy accidents.

**Batsford, £14.99**





## MASTER TIPS: EDGAR DEGAS

DISCOVER THE TECHNIQUES  
OF THE WORLD'S BEST ARTISTS

"Contrary to earlier practice in the 18th century, Degas built up the surface [of his pastels] with several layers using hatching and cross-hatching of such opacity that he almost creates a three-dimensional effect..."

"Also comparable with Degas's technique of painting, was the application of fixatives made of resin and casein, which he used like a glaze. This heightened the chromatic intensity of each layer of the pastel without causing discolouration or disturbing the texture... Many of [his] late pastels are heavily worked with forceful strokes added to the surface after the forms below have been defined. These strokes appear to have been made quite purposefully."

**Edgar Degas: Drawings and Pastels** by Christopher Lloyd is published by Thames & Hudson. [www.thamesandhudson.com](http://www.thamesandhudson.com)

EDGAR DEGAS, BALLETS SCENE, C. 1907 PASTEL ON PAPER, 76.8X11.2CM, COURTESY OF NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON

## WHY NOT TRY...

### SCUMBLING

**What is it?**

An improvised technique in which paint is scrubbed over a dry layer.

**When is it used?**

Use it for natural textures (rocks or tree bark) or areas of broken colour, such as clouds on a blue sky.

**How is it done?**

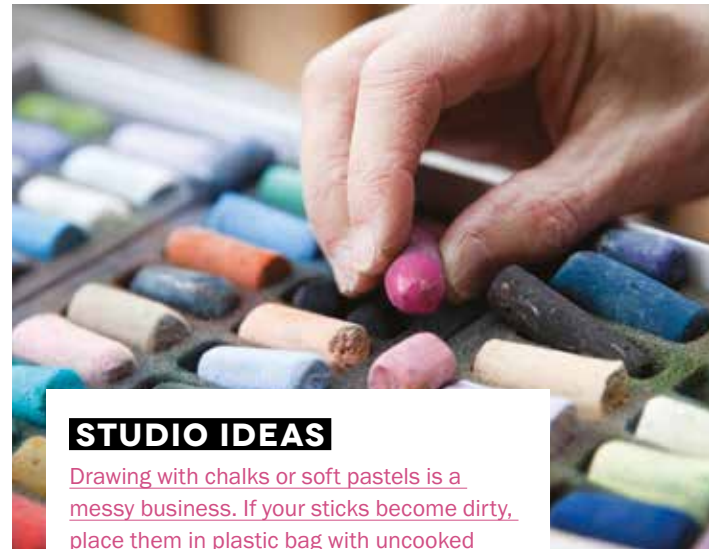
Choose a stiff bristle brush and dip it in a paint mix with a thick consistency. Scrub the brush over the required area, allowing the paint to 'bite' on the tooth of the canvas or the previous layer of paint underneath, picking out textures at random. Scumbling is more effective when used sparingly as a contrast to smoother passages of paint.



Begin by laying down a base colour...



...then scrub a contrasting colour on top



## STUDIO IDEAS

Drawing with chalks or soft pastels is a messy business. If your sticks become dirty, place them in plastic bag with uncooked white rice, tie the top and gently shake them. A cup of rice should be good to clean up 20 chalks or more. Alternatively, prevent this from happening in the first place by storing them separately. Buy a sheet of foam from an art shop. Cut small, pastel-sized recesses into it at regular intervals with a Stanley knife.

ISTOCK, COURTESY NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON



## WHAT IS... SANGUINE?

Sanguine is a red chalk popular in life drawing for more than 500 years (see Rembrandt's 1637 *Self-Portrait*). The name derives from the Latin *sanguineus*, or 'of blood'. Drawing on light or mid-toned paper, sanguine can be used to render volume and form, while also providing a soft, flesh-like hue. Try also combining with charcoal and sepia (a brown chalk) for longer, more considered poses.





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MASTERCLASS

# SPRING GARDEN

COMPLEX PATTERNS OF LEAVES, STEMS AND FLOWERS MAY LOOK LIKE A DAUNTING SUBJECT, BUT THEY CAN BE A STIMULATING CHALLENGE TO PAINT AS **ANNE-MARIE BUTLIN** EXPLAINS

50 Artists & Illustrators



Having almost always painted from direct observation I have recently been working from my own photographs of gardens and flowers in situ. Last May I went to an open garden in Stroud Green near where I live in North London that belonged to the garden designer Peter Beardsley. I was very inspired by a dense mass of spring flowers in the central part of his plot – the apparently wild beauty of this planting was, of course, very carefully constructed and maintained, but I loved the messy complexity of the leaf and flower shapes, and the freshness of the colours.

I have since painted a whole series of works using these photographs as reference. Taking a section of the garden and fitting it into a square format made for a very effective composition in this particular painting, and I like the freedom of making a more decorative and sometimes more abstracted image than usual.

It's a challenge to find a way to map out and make sense of these very complex images; staying relatively faithful to the original photograph, while adding or changing the different elements, and gradually building up a 'tapestry' of marks.

[www.anne-mariebutlin.com](http://www.anne-mariebutlin.com)



### ANNE-MARIE'S TOOLS

#### • PAINTS

Sap Green, Davy's Gray, Winsor Blue, French Ultramarine, Cobalt Turquoise, Alizarin Crimson, Permanent Rose, Permanent Magenta, Cadmium Red, Yellow Ochre, Lemon Yellow, Cadmium Yellow, Naples Yellow and Titanium White, all Winsor & Newton Artists' Oil Colours

#### • BRUSHES

Pro Arte Series 32 Polar Nylon Flat, sizes 1/8" and 1.5"; Pro Arte Series A Hog Long Flat, size 4; Pro Arte Series 201 Sterling Acrylic Long Flat, size 5

#### • SUPPORT

Winsor & Newton Professional Deep-Edge 100% linen canvas, 60x60cm



### 1 LAY DOWN A GROUND

I began by loosely applying a ground of Burnt Sienna thinned down with turps. I mapped out the composition quickly over this in Sap Green. By doing this while the ground was still wet, the colours mingled and gave a feeling of unity from the outset. I used the edge of the 1/8" flat brush to lift off excess paint and describe the delicate alliums.



### 2 DEVELOP THE COLOURS

I added different colours, including Alizarin Crimson, Permanent Magenta and Permanent Rose. Each was thinned with turps. I tried to balance the placement of each colour across the canvas for unity. As well as working out the composition, I was trying to leave some areas of paint a bit thinner so the ground would show through and give a depth of colour to the finished piece.



### 3 ESTABLISH A RHYTHM

I started to add various mauve and pink mixes here, along with some quite strong areas of a soft, creamy white of Titanium White and touches of Sap Green, Naples Yellow and Davy's Gray. I needed to get the central alliums looking strong from the outset as they tied the composition together. I was trying to get a good rhythm of both colours and shapes across the canvas for balance.



### 4 GROW ORGANICALLY

I started to fill in the gaps, trying to let the composition grow organically and getting a few of the darkest tones down so I had something to work against. I experimented with greens made using combinations of Ultramarine Blue and Lemon Yellow softened with Cadmium Red or Davy's Gray, Winsor Blue with Naples Yellow, and Sap Green mixed with Alizarin Crimson or Cadmium Red.





## 5 WEAVE THE LINES

A sense of depth emerged as I added more vertical lines. At this stage my drawing was still fairly loose and I concentrated on the balance of colours and marks. I tried to simplify the shapes and subdue the colours – for example, I didn't want the foxgloves to dominate the picture or look twee.



## 6 ASSESS YOUR PROGRESS

Stepping back to assess my progress, I felt that the composition would benefit from a band of blue sky at the top of the canvas to frame the foliage and give a sense of depth. I was looking really hard at the photograph at this stage, attempting to recreate some areas very accurately, while also making some radical changes to composition details.



## 7 LOOK FOR ODD COLOURS

I tried to combine areas of thin paint with more thickly applied, textured marks. Colour was added in a patchwork fashion, and I mixed blues and greens with each of the colours on the palette to achieve a range of mid and dark tones. As well as the obvious greens, I started to look for blues and greys in the leaves to add variety. The original photo had a coolness that I wanted to capture.



## 8 VARIETY ADDS DEPTH

I added even more of the blue sky and I liked the feeling of plant shapes silhouetted against it, although I thought it was possibly making the whole composition appear a bit flat. To combat this, I added some extra horizontals and used thinner brushes to add some fine lines and dots of colour.



## 9 WORK WET IN WET

In this detail shot, you can see the patchwork nature of the brushwork with the warm Burnt Sienna ground still poking through. I've really focused on varying the thickness of the paint and establishing a rhythmic quality to the application of colour. Sometimes colours were mixed on the palette but also layered on the canvas, wet in wet.





## 10 REFINE AND SHARPEN

Having covered the whole canvas, I wanted to refine parts of the image here. I lightened the allium stems with my larger flat brush and then using a thin brush to add in the creamy white highlights. I used the edge of the flat brush to add star shapes to the globe alliums, keeping brushwork loose on the shapes I wanted to recede into the background.

## 11 MODULATE THE COLOURS

I started to tone down the blue sky, adding a touch of grey to tie in with the other colours. I didn't like the fern in the top right corner and added a creamy-grey foxglove instead. I described the structure of the central alliums in more detail using softer grey-greens, while avoiding tightening up the drawing too much.



## Top tip

TAKE A STEP BACK  
EVERY SO OFTEN  
TO ASK YOURSELF  
WHAT IT IS THAT  
YOUR PAINTING  
NEEDS

## 12 DEEPEN CONTRASTS

The highlights and other lighter areas were sharpened up here to increase the tonal contrasts and give the impression of sunlight on the garden. I deliberately kept some of the shapes very simple and flat so that the overall effect was loose and fresh.



## 13 FINISHING TOUCHES

Final dots, dashes and highlights pulled the whole piece together. As usual, I had to make myself stop before I over-worked the image and risked ruining the liveliness of the brush marks. I hope I achieved the balance of simplicity and solid drawing that I was aiming for. Most importantly, I feel I have captured the exuberance of the garden that so inspired me in the first place.



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TRY SOMETHING NEW

# GLAZES

NEW ENGLISH ART CLUB'S **SARAH SPENCER** EXPLAINS THIS CLASSIC OIL TECHNIQUE

## Why glaze?

After the immediacy and directness of starting a work outside in the landscape, I begin a more contemplative and gradual coaxing of the painting in the studio: working over the initial under-painting, applying successive washes and glazes to the opaque underlying layers.

For me, a painting feels 'naked' until I have then built up a series of glazes and washes. Adding these layers brings a depth and subtlety that is absent in the initial stages.

## What is the difference between a glaze and a wash?

A glaze is a transparent layer of thinned paint, whereas a wash is a thinned translucent layer of paint mixed with an opaque pigment such as white.

## What effects can they create?

The addition of glazes and washes subtly alters the dry colour underneath. The colours do not physically mix: as light passes through the glaze or wash, it is reflected off the opaque layer below, so that the painting may appear to 'glow' (in the case of a glaze) or mist over (in the case of a wash). When colours are mixed via superimposed layers,

they achieve a more luminous and mellowed brilliance. They also allow the creation and manipulation of a far more subtle range of colour and tonal relationships.

## How do I apply them?

Both glazes and washes can be created by thinning and extending your oil paint with either a home-made medium consisting of equal parts of linseed oil, turpentine and damar varnish, or a pre-mixed medium such as Winsor & Newton's Liquin or Roberson's Glaze Medium.

A new glaze or wash should be applied with a wide, soft brush when the previous layer is completely dry. A lint-free cloth can be used to wipe off areas of the still-wet glaze if required. Remember that it is not necessary to glaze the whole picture at once – you might use a Burnt Umber glaze to warm up particular parts of a landscape, for example.

Washes and glazes can be alternated in successive layers, but I generally always finish with an almost-transparent glaze. I find this sorts out any unevenness in the relative glossiness of a painting's surface.

**Sarah teaches from 3-10 September at the Watermill at Posara, Italy. [www.sarah-spencer.co.uk](http://www.sarah-spencer.co.uk)**

## Glazed vs Unglazed

The difference between the two works above may not seem immediately apparent: the composition, broad colour range and tonality are all similar. The addition of glazes, however, has unified the painting on the right and brought a different intensity and mood to the final image.





WHEN IT COMES TO SECONDARY AND  
TERTIARY COLOURS, CONVENIENCE IS  
OFTEN A HUGE PART OF THEIR APPEAL



# 3. SECONDARY COLOURS

AS HIS SEARCH FOR HIS IDEAL SET OF WATERCOLOURS CONTINUES, **GRAHAME BOOTH** TURNS TO THE SECONDARY COLOURS AND HOW THEY MIX WITH HIS CHOSEN PRIMARIES. ILLUSTRATIONS: **ANDREA TURVEY**

After tackling the primary colours in our last article, I will be turning my attentions this month to the secondary colours: oranges, greens and purples. Basic colour theory has it that when any two primary colours are mixed, a secondary colour is formed. Allowing for both the traditional and modern ideas of primaries, this means that either red or magenta plus yellow gives us an orange, red or magenta plus blue or cyan gives us a purple, and blue or cyan plus yellow gives us a green. Tertiary colours (a secondary colour mixed with the adjacent primary on the colour wheel) complicate this further but for the benefits of this article I will refer to all non-primary colours as secondaries.

Now that I am including magenta and cyan in my primaries this greatly extends the range of secondary colours I can mix with them, while adding a touch of the third complementary primary in the mix extends the potential range even further.

All paint manufacturers make a huge variety of secondary and tertiary colours and convenience is often a huge part of their appeal – it is far easier to reach for a tube of what I call a ‘proprietary’ secondary colour (a secondary pre-mixed and branded in a tube by a paint manufacturer) rather than attempting to mix it. A good example of this in my own practice is when I mix an orange in order to create a grey by adding blue. If I add too much blue to the orange it is quite difficult to gauge the correct amount of red and yellow I need to add in order to bring the mix back to grey and I can easily end up with a grey that is slightly green (too much yellow) or purple (too much red). A three-paint mix has a vastly greater variety of colour possibilities than a two-paint mix, so it makes things difficult. Using a proprietary orange rather than a separate red and yellow in that particular mix is quicker, easier and more consistent, but this has to be weighed against the extra variety that is achievable with the three-paint mix.

Another advantage of a proprietary secondary is that it is often a brighter, clearer and more transparent colour than

a mixed version and the more unusual secondary colours can be difficult or even impossible to mix. Even if proprietary secondaries are used, I still feel that it is important to mix them. For example, I included Phthalo Green in my original palette, but it is such a cool colour that it can’t really be used on its own and so I must mix it with something else to give me the required variety.

Brown Madder is another colour in my original palette and can be thought of as an admittedly quite dull orange-red, yet the dullness is really its virtue because it looks so natural in a painting. Even so I will almost always alter it slightly by adding a touch of red or yellow, again to create variety. I would rarely if ever use a colour straight from the tube. I usually mix but it is so easy to be influenced by the intensity of the secondaries on a colour chart. Indeed this is why I chose these particular secondary colours to test – they just looked so nice.

Alongside testing the colours, I tried to mix their equivalents with varying results. You can see a few examples over the next six pages. My mixed oranges are not as bright as the proprietary colours and I can’t quite match the purity of the Phthalo Greens, but do I really need that absolute purity?

When it comes to narrowing down your chosen palette, this is a good question to ask yourself. I never use pure Phthalo Green anyway and an orange fruit or flower will never really require a ‘pure’ orange anyway, because of the effect of shadows and reflections. Every artist will have a different opinion because our perception of colour is very personal. You only need to look through this issue of *Artists & Illustrators* to see how the different painters treat colour. I don’t believe that any of the secondaries are absolutely essential in my palette, but there is no doubt that a careful selection can definitely make mixing colours simpler. An orange would be useful but I suspect I will find Burnt Sienna to be more useful in the long term.

>

**LEFT** Positano, watercolour on Bockingford 200lb NOT paper, 36x26cm

I painted this with my six-colour palette supplemented with Phthalo Green. The colours were completely different compared to the duller hues I would have mixed with my old palette and I enjoyed the extra vibrancy.





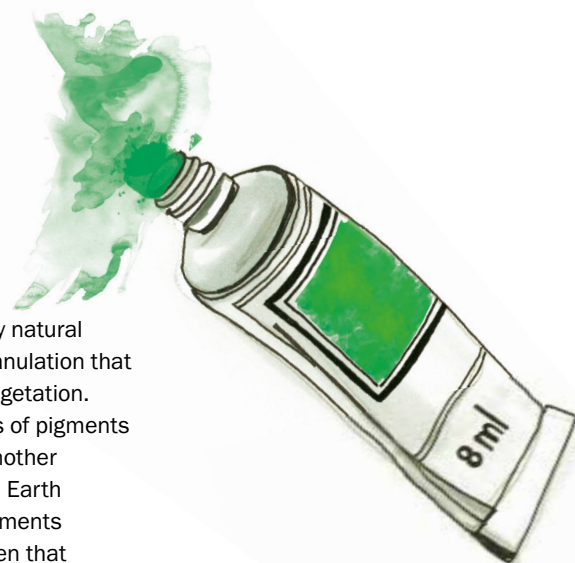
## GREENS

As a landscape painter, greens were an important consideration for me. Phthalo Green is perfect for creating intense darks with my reds and it creates great natural greens with Burnt Sienna. Another green I was very taken with was Cobalt Teal. It mixes with Quinacridone Magenta to create some lovely silvery greys and lavenders, and with Phthalo Blue for great sea colours.

Daniel Smith's Green Apatite Genuine was an interesting colour too. It is a very natural looking green but it also has a dark brown granulation that is very attractive and eminently suitable for vegetation. The colour is one of the PrimaTek range of natural mineral-based paints from Daniel Smith.

In an age when many pigments are created in the laboratory and mass-produced in a factory, it is nice to think that such natural pigments still have a role to play in an artist's palette. The granulating properties of mineral pigments may not be to everyone's taste, but there is no denying that this is a beautiful colour.

Several green tube paints that I tested were made from a mixture of pigments that included black. I have always steered clear of black, but I can't honestly see that it created any significant opacity issues, which is usually the worry. It will be interesting to see how these colours fare when I come to test the black pigments next month and mix them with my primaries instead.



## EARTHY GREENS

Daniel Smith's Green Apatite Genuine is a very natural looking green, but it also has a dark brown granulation that is very attractive and eminently suitable for vegetation.

Often the proprietary secondaries are mixes of pigments and so there may be no direct equivalent in another manufacturer's range. QoR's Bohemian Green Earth (PBk7, PG7, PR101 and PY42) is a mix of 4 pigments including black. It is quite a useful natural green that would work well in a landscape.

Schmincke's Green Yellow (PY150 and PBk7) is a mix of a cool yellow with Carbon Black, but this must be biased towards blue to create the green.

Elsewhere, QoR's Green Gold (PY129) looks very rich in the tube, but washes out to a dull yellow, while the Sap Green (PB29 and PY153) from Sennelier was essentially a mix of Ultramarine and Indian Yellow. The colour is perfectly pleasant, but as with all of these quite natural greens, you may be better served by mixing them from your primaries.

Daniel Smith's Green Apatite Genuine is such a usable colour straight from the tube that you may be tempted to just use it neat, yet adding small amounts of yellow or blue simply expands the possibilities. Note the attractive granulation of this pigment in all parts of this mix.

Green Apatite Genuine



Green Apatite Genuine  
+ Quinacridone Gold

Green Apatite Genuine  
+ Ultramarine







### BLUE-GREENS AND YELLOW-GREENS

Phthalo Green (or Phthalocyanine to give it the full name) is very transparent and will mix a vast variety of colours – I use it a lot with Burnt Sienna for rich natural greens. Phthalo Green is available as a Yellow Shade (PG36) or Blue Shade (PG7). The Schmincke Phthalo Green and M Graham & Co. Phthalocyanine Green were both pure PG7 pigments yet the Schmincke paint was noticeably easier to lift. Winsor & Newton's Phthalo Green (Yellow Shade) and MaimerBlu's Cupric Green Light are pure PR36, whereas MaimerBlu Green Blue contains PG7 plus Phthalo Blue.

Cobalt Teal (PG50) is a pigment that varies in colour from blue to yellow shades. The QoR example is a beautiful colour that mixes well despite being far more opaque than the other greens.

When painting coastal scenes, silvery sand can be a difficult mix to create but adding a touch of Quinacridone Magenta to QoR's Cobalt Teal will give you instant tropical beaches.



Cobalt Teal +  
Pyrrole Red

Cobalt Teal +  
Quinacridone Magenta

I WAS VERY TAKEN WITH QOR'S COBALT TEAL... IT MIXES WITH QUINACRIDONE MAGENTA TO CREATE SOME LOVELY SILVERY GREYS AND LAVENDERS



**LEFT Rathlin Island, watercolour on Bockingford 200lb NOT paper, 36x26cm**

As I practiced with the six-colour palette, I began to feel more confident with my colour mixing and I was increasingly able to mix the colours I saw in my head.

I rarely attempt to recreate the actual colours I see in a subject – a successful painting depends not on copying real colours but rather in creating a range of colours that blend well together and give the suggestion of the real colours.

I feel my new darks have more variety and the combined intensity of Phthalo Blue (Green Shade) and Quinacridone Magenta creates a sky blue that is much stronger than my previous Cobalt Blue. Ending up with a sky that is too light is very common when it is the first wash you apply, but this mix doesn't seem to dry as light as the Cobalt Blue did. >



## ORANGES

Many painters will find that secondary colours are less useful to buy straight from the tube, when they can be mixed quite easily from the primaries. In fact, I have always found oranges to be quite useful, although it will be interesting to see if that is still the case after we have tested and considered the earth colours next month.

Despite Quinacridone Gold technically being a primary 'yellow', I have included it in the secondaries as it is a rather unusual colour. It appears to be a warm brownish colour when concentrated, but a very cool yellow when diluted. It mixes beautifully with Ultramarine Blue to create some lovely soft greens and creates sienna-like shades with blended with Pyrrole Red.

## QUINACRIDONE GOLD MIXES BEAUTIFULLY WITH ULTRAMARINE BLUE TO CREATE SOME LOVELY SOFT GREENS AND CREATES SIENNA-LIKE SHADES WITH BLENDED WITH PYRROLE RED



## ORANGES

The first two oranges are based on Transparent Pyrrole Orange (P071), whereas Sennelier's Chinese Orange is a mixture of Nickel Azo Yellow (PY150), Quinacridone Red (PR209) and Disazo Brown (PBr23) pigments so it doesn't actually include orange!

If you need a pure bright orange any of these will fit the bill, even if Aureolin mixed with Pyrrole Red or Quinacridone Magenta won't be far away.

## RED-ORANGES

Daniel Smith's Transparent Pyrrol Orange is another P071 colour that comes out far redder in practice.

The other two red-biased oranges are based on PR206, a burnt scarlet pigment that can vary in appearance. In fact, I was rather surprised to discover that Winsor & Newton's Brown Madder and Permanent Alizarin Crimson – two paints I have been using for years – are both based on PR206 even though they are clearly different colours. I included Winsor & Newton's Brown Madder here alongside QoR's Quinacridone Burnt Orange, which was very similar in practice.

## YELLOW-ORANGES

Quinacridone Gold is technically a primary 'yellow', but appears here because it is such an unusual, orange-tinged colour. Each manufacturer seems to have a different recipe for Quinacridone Gold, which surprised me because it is such a distinctive colour.

Daniel Smith's version uses true Quinacridone Gold pigment (PO49), whereas M Graham & Co.'s Nickel Quinacridone Gold mixes Quinacridone Orange (PO48) and Nickel Azo Complex (PY150). Winsor & Newton, meanwhile, blends the latter with Quinacridone Violet (PV19) and Quinacridone Burnt Scarlet (PR 206).

I tried mixing the three oranges with a warm blue (Ultramarine) and a cool one (Phthalo Blue) to highlight the range of useful natural colours that can be achieved in a two-colour mix.







## PURPLES

As an artist who paints landscapes primarily, I don't feel the need for a purple. I can create a variety of purples sufficient for my needs from a mix of my chosen primary colours (mixing Phthalo Blue or Ultramarine with Quinacridone Magenta will give you a good range of violets, for example). Likewise, a neat purple from the tube isn't particularly useful in mixes either – when mixed with its complementary, yellow, for example, most purples produce a range of dull reds and browns that can easily be mixed directly with primaries alone.

Having said all of this, remember that it is never wrong to use a particular colour and it is never wrong to mix any colours. I believe that a limited palette works best for me, but if you prefer to have a larger variety of colours to work with straight from the tube then go for it. If it works for you that is really all that matters.

## VIOLETS

If you need a pure violet, Dioxazine (PV23) is a really nice base. MaimeriBlu offers two options – Permanent Violet Blueish (pure PV23) and Permanent Violet Reddish, which adds a little Quinacridone Red (PR122) to the mix.

Schmincke's Quinacridone Violet (PV19), meanwhile, is slightly redder than the other violets – indeed PV19 is also known as Quinacridone Rose.

Cobalt Violet (PV14) is a distinctive colour – my mix of Ultramarine and Quinacridone Magenta came close but certainly didn't have the vibrancy of the pure pigment. It is not a colour that I particularly need, but botanical illustrators or garden painters maybe enjoy the impact it provides.



## BLUE-PURPLES

When choosing these pigments to test, I picked the first three here without realising they were all based on the same pigment (PB60). All three have a lovely deep blue-violet colour, but without the deadness that a lot of indigos have. I was able to mix a close approximation from Ultramarine and Quinacridone Magenta with a touch of Aureolin, but a tube could still come in handy rather than resorting to this.

Daniel Smith's Moonglow is a rather nice purple-grey mixed from a blend of Viridian, Ultramarine and Anthraquinone Red pigments (PG18, PB29 and PR177). It makes for a good shadow colour, but if I was trying to restrict my palette, I could potentially mix a similar colour from the primaries already in my paintbox – Ultramarine and Pyrrole Red, for example.



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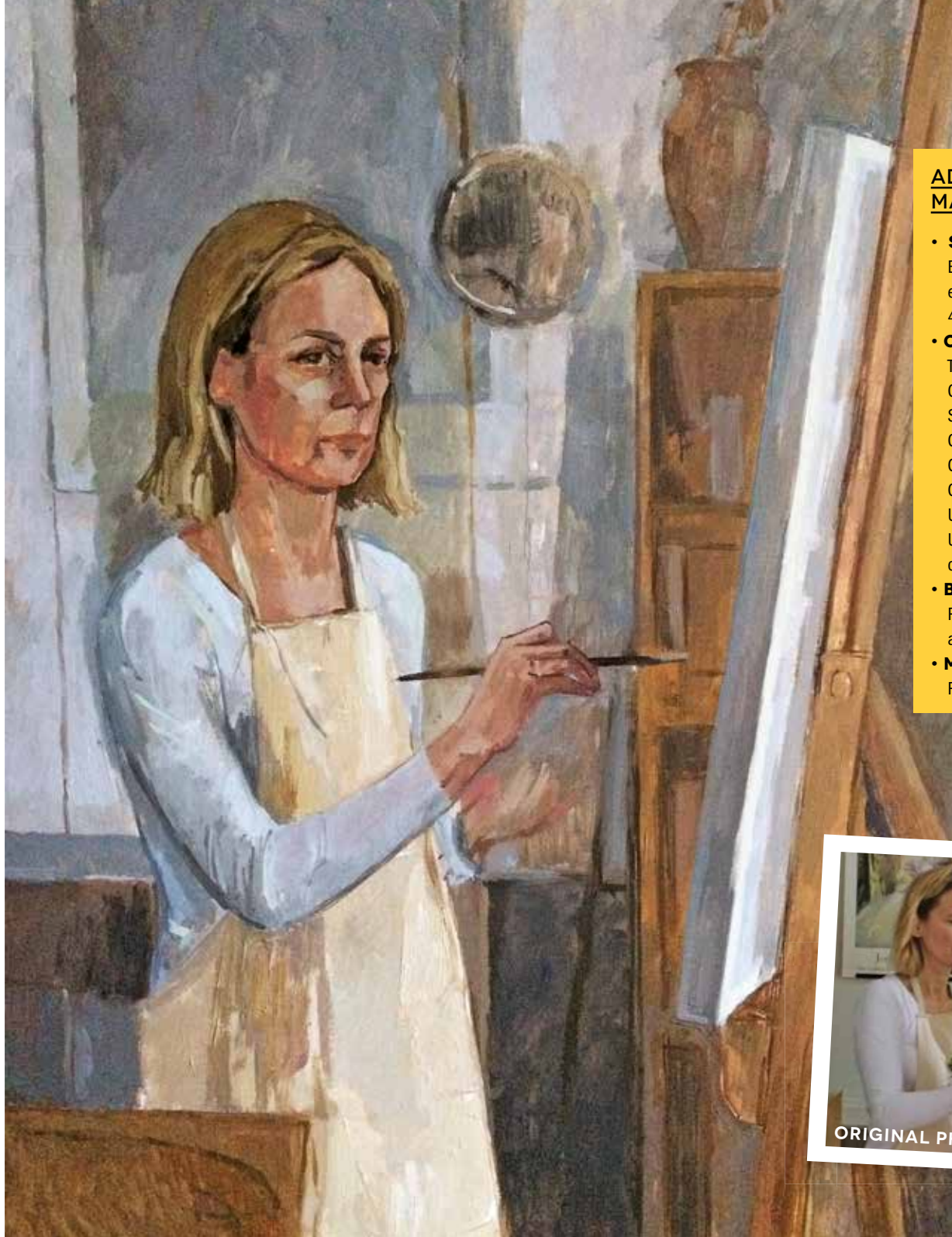
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## ADÈLE'S MATERIALS

### • SUPPORT

Belle Arti oil-primed extra fine linen canvas, 40x50cm

### • OILS

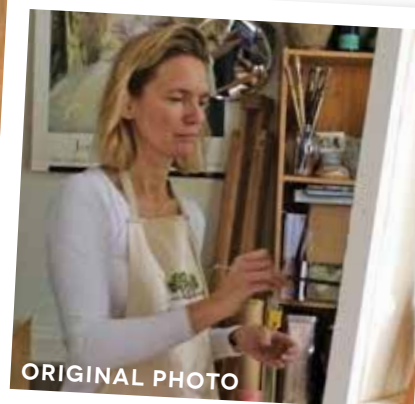
Titanium White, Cadmium Lemon, Raw Sienna, Burnt Sienna, Cadmium Red, Alizarin Crimson, Terre Verte, Cerulean Blue, French Ultramarine and Raw Umber artists' oil colours

### • BRUSHES

Rounds, sizes 2, 4, 6 and 8; Rigger, size 2

### • MEDIUM

Refined linseed oil



## PROJECT

# PAINTING THE PAINTER

IF YOU WANT TO PAINT A PORTRAIT BUT CAN'T FIND SOMEONE TO SIT FOR LONG ENOUGH, TRY PAINTING A FELLOW ARTIST. **ADÈLE WAGSTAFF** SHOWS YOU HOW IT'S DONE

For many years, I have made drawings and paintings of musicians in rehearsal. I enjoy watching their complete focus whilst practising and also the fact that they are totally unaware of being observed or scrutinised in the way that a portrait sitter in the studio can be.

When someone is totally absorbed in an activity there often isn't that same level of self-awareness as they are lost in concentration, whether they are playing an instrument, reading a book or painting a picture.

My interest in painting artists began

when I made quick sketches of students in my classes while they were working. They were so absorbed in the act of observation that they were oblivious to the fact that they were a subject too.

Although painting a constantly moving figure is incredibly challenging (not to mention frustrating), the variety of poses and actions made during the course of a sitting are often repeated. You will begin to find that the angles and negative shapes created by your sitter's movements occur time and time again.





### THE STUDY

For the demonstration opposite, I painted my fellow artist Rachel. The idea came about after I had painted a self-portrait in a similar brush-in-hand pose. I started off by making a small oil study (above) in preparation for the larger painting, in which Rachel is busy observing me, painting her.

**1** I began by measuring this complex composition and marking it out on the canvas with a rigger brush and a dilute wash of Raw Umber. I plotted a number of points against which I could check the position of the figure, including the easel, the bookcase and the bottom corner of the table.

Try to look at both the shapes of the objects and the negative spaces between them. I used a warm grey mix to block-in these negative shapes.

**2** I patched in areas of colour over the surface using the smaller round brushes and the size 2 rigger

for the finer lines. My overall palette was rather dark with warm blue-grey mixes dominating alongside Raw and Burnt Sienna. The angles of the head were positioned while simplifying the overall form as much as possible.

**3** As the subject was constantly moving, it was difficult to pin down the position of the arm. I used the size 2 rigger to establish the angles of the arm and hand. Each time the arm returns to this position, more can be added. If needed, ask the model to hold the pose for longer once everything else has developed. >





**4** Much of the work during this stage was on the head, shoulders, arm and hand, focusing in particular on the shape of the hand holding the brush.

I felt that the profile of the model's face was getting lost against the tone of her hair and background so a fine line was placed along the edge to separate the two areas for now.

**5** Patching in colour had resulted in some of the original Raw Umber lines being over-painted, so I re-established the drawing here - particularly around the easel. I used the rigger brush and a dilute mix of

Raw Sienna and Raw Umber, checking the angles again and drawing them in along with the edge of the canvas.

**6** I used a size 4 round brush to build up the paint around the face and hair, adding more linseed oil to thin the paint mixes a little. I did a little more drawing using a fine rigger brush to establish the position of the mouth and the base of nose, as well as doing further work around the eyes.

**7** Rachel's arm had been constantly moving around as she painted, so it had been very difficult to finalise any

decisions about its scale or angle. I asked her during this session to hold the position of her arm for longer periods of time. With the chance to check measurements better, I lowered her painted elbow slightly and extended the sleeve to her wrist.

**8** I stepped back to see my adjustments within the context of the complete image. The tone of the mirror in the background was darkened, while a few fluid brushstrokes were used to suggest the position of the other hand and arm. The tones around the bookcase were darkened so that it didn't appear to jump forward any more, while the edges of the canvas were tidied up and better defined.

**9** Time to focus on the final details. I added a few objects to the top of the shelves and established the small planes that describe the form of the face. Highlights were picked out on her cheekbone, forehead and nose.

**10** I finished by developing the drawing of the hand, looking more closely at the shape of the fingers holding the brush.

**Adèle teaches a painting holiday with Arte Umbria from 7-14 September – visit [www.arteumbria.com](http://www.arteumbria.com) for more details. Her work also features in 12@Menier, which runs from 22-27 February at Menier Gallery, London SE1. [www.adelewagstaff.co.uk](http://www.adelewagstaff.co.uk)**





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© Image - Janette Summerfield RBSA, Silver Birches, Oil (detail).

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# BLENDING ACRYLICS

LEADING ARTIST AND *VIBRANT ACRYLICS* AUTHOR **HASHIM AKIB** SUGGESTS A SERIES OF USEFUL TRICKS AND TIPS FOR CREATING SMOOTHER TRANSITIONS IN PAINT

**T**here are many great advantages to painting with acrylics but blending is not one of them – in fact, it is one of this medium's biggest weaknesses.

If you have ever tried to paint a flat area of colour, a graduated sky or a subtle skin tone, then you will know that the acrylics will make you work to achieve them.

The main issue when it comes to good blending is the rapid drying time of the acrylics, which inhibits the movement of paint. Even when fresh paint is applied almost immediately, the previous layers have already begun to dry and so inconsistencies appear in the blends, resulting in blotchy and uneven brushstrokes.

If you have turned to acrylics from either a watercolour or oil painting background, you may find it very frustrating if you try to use the same techniques in the new medium. While there are similarities, acrylic is its own medium and it needs to be understood properly in order to achieve the best results.

When watercolourists paint skies, they rely upon fluidity and gravity to subtly manoeuvre the layers into one another. Oil painters, meanwhile, can excessively brush and feather the paint to achieve seamless blends, as the prolonged drying time and nature of the oil content helps to keep the paint active for longer. In contrast, acrylics are water-based and the resin that binds the pigments together lacks the softness of watercolour, so they can become dull and lifeless if you attempt to mix them for long periods. Bear this in mind, however, and you will improve your blending no end.

## CHOOSING PAINTS

It is important to remember that there isn't just one type of acrylic paint. The range of options varies in consistency, from the liquid acrylics and acrylic inks that provide fluidity, to the newer spray cans which can create incredibly smooth, even layers.

**ABOVE** *Circus*, acrylic on canvas, 80x100cm

This painting used a variety of sharp blends and smooth transitions. The contrast between polished areas and pronounced mark-making accentuates those differences even more, making the artistic process much more interesting. With such a busy scene, I saved the smoothest blends for the sky area to create a space for the painting to 'breathe' a little.

>



## BLENDING ACRYLICS

While I would recommend practicing with traditional acrylic paints to find the best blending solutions, acrylic is available as 'smooth', 'heavy body' and even – in the case of Liquitex – 'super heavy body' versions. Smooth is the obvious choice for blending, but the heavy body options do offer slightly longer drying times.

Another alternative is Open (or 'Interactive') acrylics, which allow layers to be rehydrated so that you can work in new applications, but they have drawbacks. Open acrylics are fine for glazing or painting thin layers, but I find them less vibrant for impasto work or thicker blends. It is also worth mentioning the difference between 'artist' and 'student' grades of paint when it comes to blending. Artist quality paints are more of an expense, but do contain more pigment and fewer binders, so diluting them will have less of an effect on the brilliance of the final colours.

If you are struggling to achieve better blends with traditional acrylics alone, it is worth considering adding a medium. Unless you can paint incredibly fast, adding a medium to your acrylics will greatly increase the paint flow by either thinning the mix or prolonging drying times depending on the desired effects. (It is tempting to simply dilute the acrylics with water, but this runs the risk of decreasing the quantity of binder in the paint to a level where it won't adhere to your chosen surface). If you think of mediums as colourless paint, which include the same binder, this allows for the thinning or thickening of the paint while maintaining a good level of adhesion to the paper or canvas.

In terms of slowing the drying times, Acrylic Retarder is the most suitable medium, but the quantity you use in any given mix should not outweigh the amount of paint, as it will cause the colours to become duller. Flow Enhancer is my preferred choice for increasing paint flow and retaining colour brilliance, as it is a liquid that can either be used neat or added to water. Depending on how much is used, the applications will also leave a slightly glossy finish when dry.

Hashim's book, *Vibrant Acrylics*, is published by Search Press. [www.hashimakib.com](http://www.hashimakib.com)

### SMOOTH BLENDS

An effective way of creating a graduated sky in acrylics is to work the paint in short cross-hatching or multi-diagonal strokes. In the example on the right, I used a 1.5" flat brush, which I find ideal for these applications (for even smoother blends, try a smaller brush). I chose just two Heavy Body acrylics for this – Process Cyan and Titanium White – with water to dilute. Starting with a relatively wet brush, I dabbed some blue and a touch of white, mixed them together and applied in firm, diagonal strokes to the top of the painting. To modulate the colour, I added more white and progressed towards a lighter blue at the base. Once the required area was covered, I then feathered in a few additional strokes by holding the brush further down the handle.



### UNEVEN BLENDS

This example demonstrates the unevenness that can occur when painting with dilute acrylics. Even when using watercolour-style wet-on-wet techniques – by wetting the surface of your paper or canvas and using a brush loaded with water and paint – acrylics still lack the ability to create soft and diffused edges.

However, one advantage to acrylic washes is that there is no colour shift when the layers dry – unlike watercolour, which can dry 50% lighter.





## STREAKY BLENDS

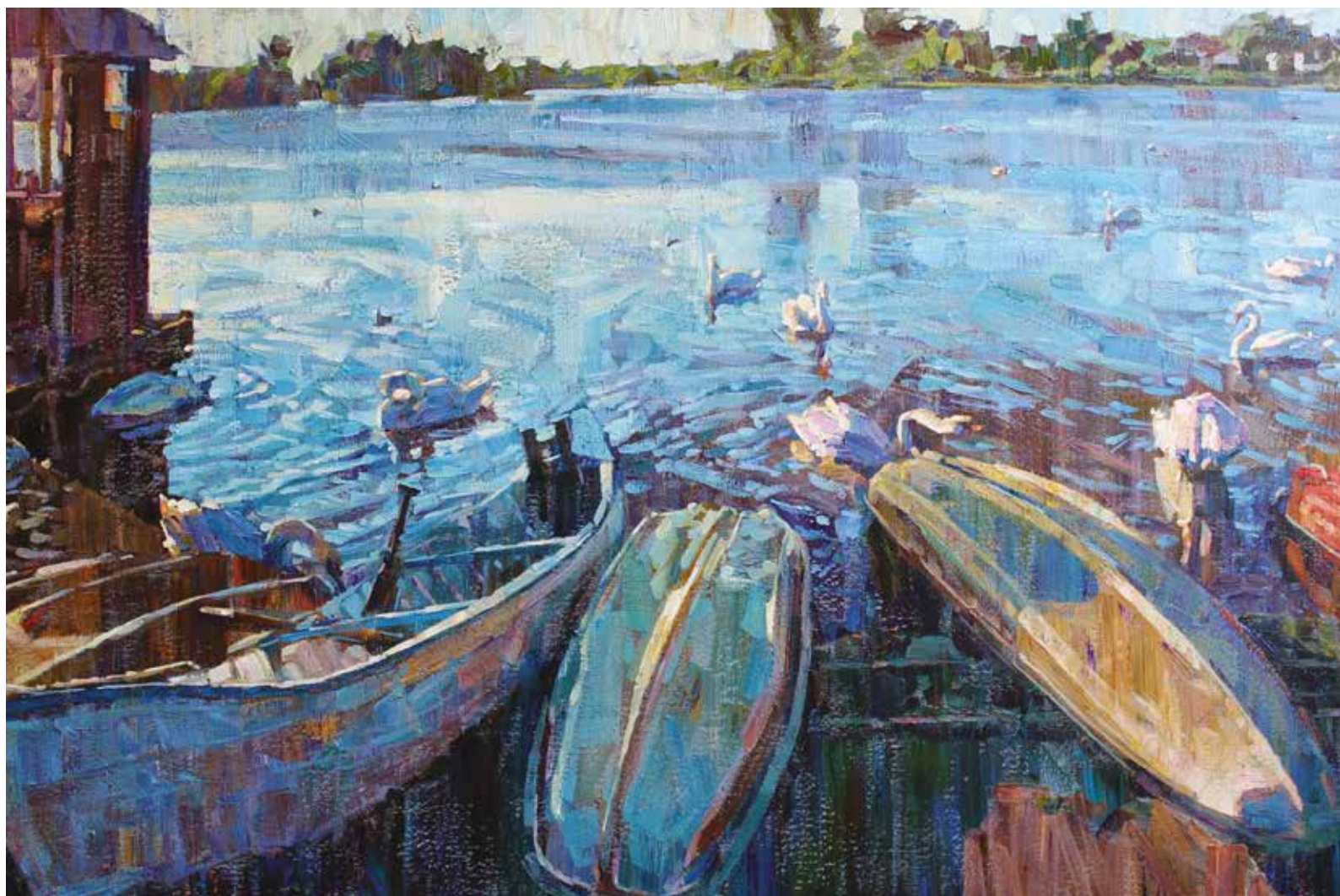
I am a great believer in allowing any medium to act naturally, even at the expense of the image that's being painted. If acrylics create uneven and streaky layers, try integrating these marks into paintings rather than seeing them as problems.

Large brushes can work wonders when loaded with multiple different or similar colours and dragged down in one swoop. Even before any other layers or definition is applied, the natural blending effects are unique each time and this brings an edgier, less polished look to your paintings.



## BELOW *Thorpeness*, acrylic on canvas, 60x80cm

With more than half of this Suffolk scene occupied by the lake, I used Flow Enhancer to blend the water and recreate the sense of calm. The acrylic was still fairly thick but the Flow Enhancer allowed for both a longer drying time and a longer brushstroke too. The other areas of the picture were painted without the addition of Flow Enhancer, providing a contrast between coarse and smooth layers.







ATELIER METHOD

## 3. CAST PAINTING

IN THE FINAL PART OF HIS SHORT SERIES, LONDON ATELIER OF REPRESENTATIONAL ART TUTOR **RADOSLAV TOPALOV** SHOWS YOU HOW TO PUT THE LESSONS LEARNED IN DRAWING INTO PRACTICE WITH OIL PAINT



ORIGINAL CAST

The 'atelier method' is a system of teaching representational art techniques that dates back to the 19th century and was followed by the likes of Pablo Picasso and John Singer Sargent.

Cast painting is a very important milestone for the atelier student, as it is the first point at which they are allowed to use paint. Oils are the most versatile yet also the most complex material in the repertoire of the trainee artist, as they combine the problems of drawing with the added complexities of hues, colour temperatures, application, material choices and much more. This exercise is designed to introduce you to a few of these problems in the safe, static environment of the cast-painting studio.

When it comes to choosing your paints, there are generally two kinds of oil paint on the market: artists' (or professional) quality and student quality. While the prices of the student-grade paints are

considerably lower, the difference in quality is not to be underestimated.

Student-quality paints usually contain one or more substitute pigments that, while looking like a similar hue, will actually create unexpected effects when applied to the canvas or added to a mix.

Professional-grade paints on the other hand are often made with a single stable pigment or time-tested recipes that ensure consistent quality and durability. Always buy the best paint you can afford, as it is your most important tool.

Brushes are the other part of your toolkit worth investing in. If you look after them and clean them well, good brushes will keep their shape for longer and don't break easily. For this exercise I will use four different kinds of brushes: hog hair filberts, synthetic filberts, soft natural hair filberts and soft natural hair pointed rounds.





## YOUR PALETTE

Every artist will arrange his or her palette differently and there is no right or wrong here – it is all about comfort and ease. Nevertheless, here is a strategy I use that may make things easier for you.

Squeeze out a blob of each colour on the outer edge of the palette. Choose a particular order that you can stick to each time, so you become familiar with the layout and instinctively find each colour. I tend to arrange mine from lightest to darkest.

In this exercise, I used three paints: Titanium White, Raw

Umber and Ivory Black.

With your pigments laid out, mix a general light value colour – in this instance, I mixed Titanium White with a touch of the other two colours. Now mix a general dark value colour, using mainly Raw

Umber and Ivory Black. Next prepare a colour 'string' for each mix. A colour string is a premixed pile of paint that contains a variety of tonal values. You can create them on your palette with a palette knife and they will help you identify and apply the correct tones quickly and easily.

## 1 TONE YOUR PAPER

Begin by applying a thin wash of Raw Umber diluted with a little bit of solvent over the whole canvas. This layer is called the imprimatura. The aim is to eliminate the white, as it can be very distracting to work on.

Next, carefully mark the top, bottom and widest points of the cast on the canvas. These are the largest measurements of the cast and it is very important to

get them right; if not, everything will end up misplaced.

For the initial block in, the only colour I use is Raw Umber, because it provides a quite neutral tone that is neither too dark nor too light and blends well with my imprimatura.

Use a paper tissue or a small rag to correct any errors and remove excess paint in the same way you would with a rubber in a charcoal drawing.

## 2 BLOCKING IN

With as few marks as possible, broadly block in the biggest lines you can see on the cast. Use very little or no solvent in your paint at this stage and very little paint on the brush. This allows for a very thin, soft application and prevents any build up of paint. Avoid any thicker passages of paint on the canvas at this stage (hog hair brushes are ideal for this), as it will be harder to work more delicately on top of it later.

In the same fashion, loosely block in the shadow shapes. Aim to keep the tone quite light, spreading the paint over a larger area to allow darker accents to be added later on.

I also try to include some of the background in my shadow pattern to get a better idea of the contour of the cast.

Now with slightly more paint on your brush, try to make the shapes a bit more specific and sharper where required, correcting any errors as you go. I also look a bit more closely at the outer contour of the cast.

Despite aiming to improve the accuracy here, I still want to keep everything relatively loose to allow myself to be less precious about the lines I make and keep thinking about large shapes and the relationships between them. I always try and use the largest brush possible to keep myself from fiddling too much. >







### 3 BACKGROUND

When you are happy with the drawing, it is time to place the darkest values.

Typically, the darkest values are found where the cast itself is casting shadows on the background so this is where you should look for them.

At this point, you can reach for the pure Ivory Black paint for the first time. Use a clean brush to avoid any unwanted mixing with the Raw Umber.

If possible, always use different brushes for your lightest and darkest values to keep the painting clean.

### IF POSSIBLE, ALWAYS USE DIFFERENT BRUSHES FOR YOUR LIGHTEST AND DARKEST VALUES TO KEEP THE PAINTING CLEAN

### 4 KEY

With the darkest dark in place, it is time to 'key' the shadows (for a full explanation of keying, see part 1 in issue 360). Look at the cast and try to relate the general value of the shadows on the cast to the darkest ones in the background. Mix Ivory Black and Raw Umber for this on the palette and lightly rub in a thin layer of paint in the

shadows. Keep these areas quite thin for as long as possible, so the thicker paint and texture in the lighter parts of the painting can stand out more later on.

You can use either hog or synthetic brushes for this stage, depending on your personal preference. If you want to avoid any brushmarks being visible and keep the paint quite flat, try the synthetics.



### 5 LARGER PLANES

Block in the biggest value planes you can see on the cast, starting with the lightest ones, because their value is most obvious and will also establish the value range. Use a mix of Titanium White and a very small amount of Raw Umber or Ivory Black depending on the required colour temperature – Raw Umber is the warmest colour on your palette so reserve it for the warmer areas.

Next, look for the value planes that sit in between the lightest planes and the shadows. Again, use a mixture of your three colours, but this time around add more of the two darker paints. Keep adding to the background as you go to gradually bring the picture together, working in a similarly broad manner until the entire canvas is covered and the contrast between the cast and the background feels right.





## 6 SMALLER PLANES

After the largest planes have been established, look for the smaller ones that sit in between. As you do that, look for the largest ones possible at first. Whatever you are painting, always work from the general to the specific in every stage.

Details and smaller shapes are always much more successful if they are placed on top of the already established context of the whole. Use some larger soft brushes for the softer areas of the cast.

## 7 OBSERVE COLOURS

Although at first the plaster cast may seem colourless to the untrained eye, a closer observation will eventually reveal very subtle colour temperature shifts throughout the surface; adding them to your painting can add interest.

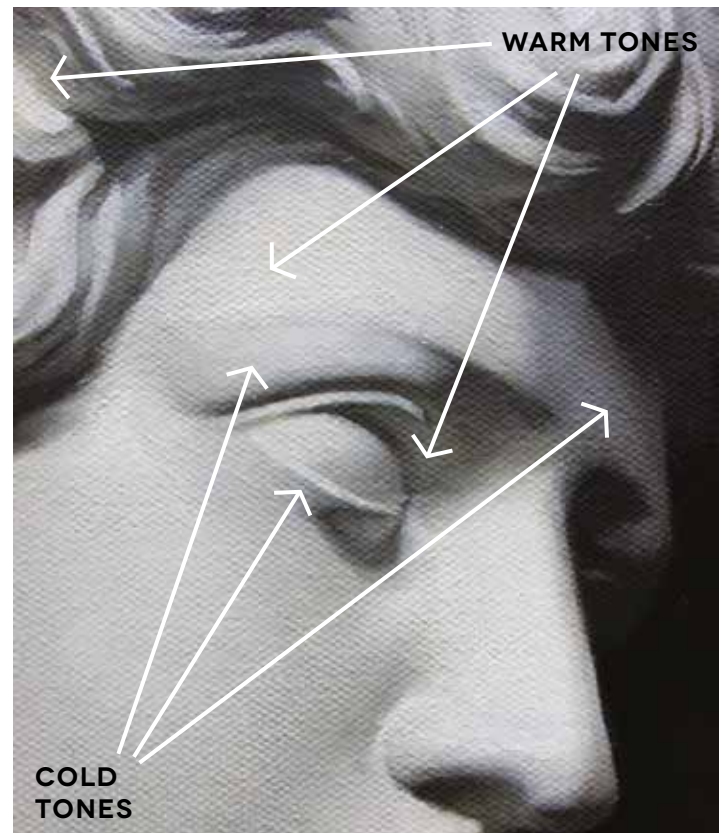
Bear in mind, however, that the cast is actually white and you won't ever see any extreme variations, so be careful not to exaggerate them. Patience is key when you attempt to get it right.

In your three-colour palette, both Titanium White and Ivory

Black are cold colours, so colder mixes will be easier to achieve.

Try adding a little bit of Raw Umber to your mix whenever you encounter a warm colour. If the mix becomes too dark, add more white. If it gets too cold again, keep adding Raw Umber with the white, as this will reduce the proportion of black in your mix. You will eventually arrive at the desired value and temperature.

With practice you will be able to judge the temperature and mix the desired tone right away without having to go through this process.



## 8 RENDER AND FINISH

Finish by trying to articulate the finer aspects of the painting using your smaller, softer brushes. Start looking for smaller shapes and more subtle transitions of tone.

If you notice any errors even at this stage, don't hesitate to correct them. Remember that an error only becomes a mistake if it is still there when the painting is finished.

As you keep adding more information and detail, always be aware of the variety of edges to the different shapes and try to reproduce them as closely as possible. It is the variation of soft and hard edges that will bring form to your piece.

**Radoslav teaches on the Saturday School at London Atelier of Representational Art. To book your place, visit [www.drawpaintsculpt.com](http://www.drawpaintsculpt.com)**





**LEFT** Siân Dudley, *Pears*, watercolour on NOT paper

"Notice how the cold-pressed paper shows up the loose textural marks on the pear's surface, while still allowing more precise marks on the base of the pears and the veins on the leaves."

## HOW TO CHOOSE

# WATERCOLOUR PAPER

ARTIST **SIÂN DUDLEY** HELPS YOU PRIORITISE THE IMPORTANT FACTORS

When I give demonstrations, I am always asked which paper I am using. The real question we should be asking is why I made that particular choice for that particular painting.

There are three main categories of surface texture: rough, cold-pressed (or NOT) and hot-pressed (HP). Rough paper is an ideal choice if you want rich textures and a sense of movement in your watercolours. With control, the paint can pool in the dips of the paper or skim the bumpy surface, producing wonderful granulation effects.

For artists of a more precise nature, hot-pressed paper is a much better option. HP papers are extremely smooth with a delicate tooth, allowing precise placement of the paint without overly controlling the flow. They are ideal for more sedate subjects, as the

moods evoked by a more restrained method of painting are often calmer.

Falling between those two extremes is NOT paper, a versatile surface that is suitable for a diverse range of subject matter and moods. There are enough bumps and dips to enable the production of some lovely granulation effects and broken lines, but it remains possible to incorporate a fair degree of detail too.

When planning a new picture, begin by considering your subject matter and the manner in which you want to paint it. Make a considered choice of surface texture based on your decisions and your practical knowledge of what you are able to achieve on the different surfaces. If you are uncertain of the latter, it is time to get a selection of papers and explore the possibilities.

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## CHOOSING YOUR PAPER

Five key things to consider

### 1. SURFACE

Papers range in smoothness from 'rough' to 'hot-pressed' (or HP) – see below.

### 2. WEIGHT

Often measured in grams per square metre (gsm). Anything above 356gsm shouldn't require stretching.

### 3. COLOUR

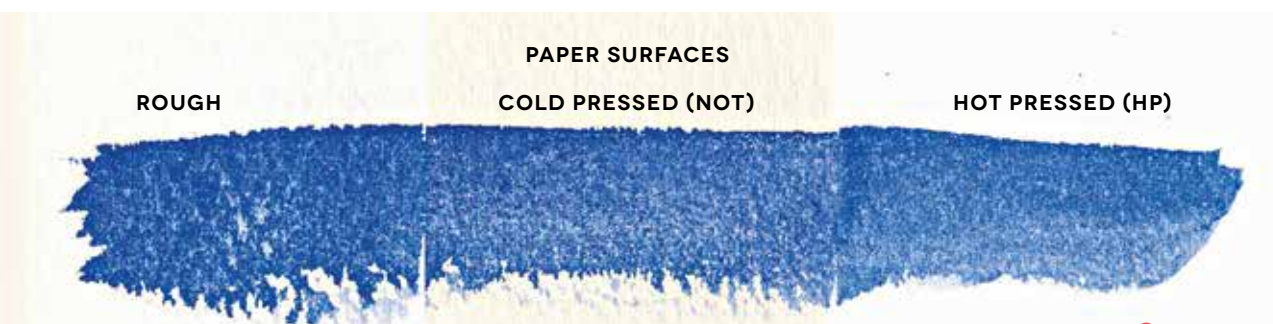
Choose white paper for brightness or coloured papers for interesting tonal challenges.

### 4. SIZING

'Sizing' increases paper's resistance to liquids and allows easier reworking of the paint. Stretching a paper will remove excess sizing.

### 5. STABILITY

To ensure your paintings don't discolour over time, choose a pH neutral or 'acid free' paper.



Notice how one brushstroke gives different textures across the three different paper surfaces.



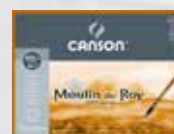
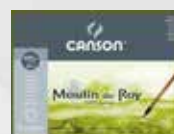


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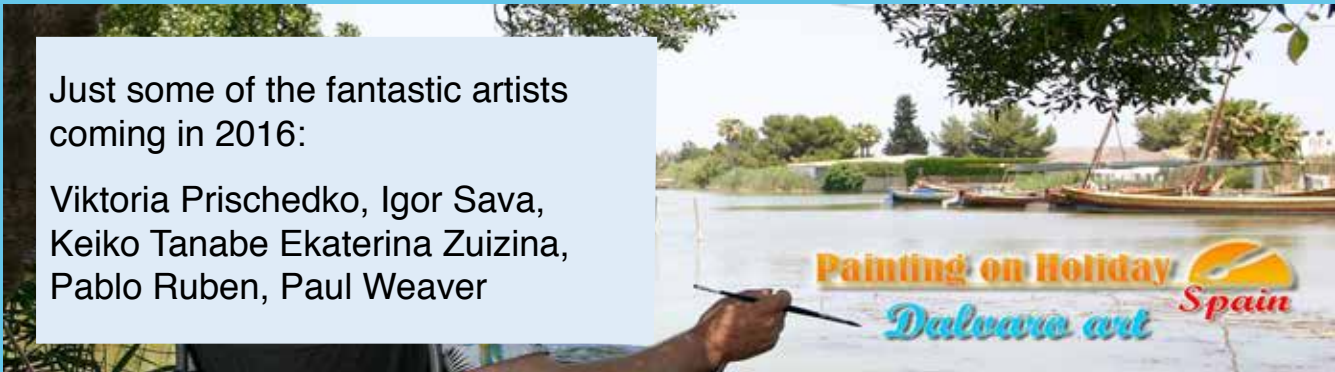


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## DEMONSTRATION

# PAINTING *alla prima*

ARTIST **LIZET DINGEMANS** INTRODUCES A QUICK AND EASY WAY TO PAINT IN OILS

In this step-by-step guide you will learn how to approach an alla prima painting. Alla prima literally means “at first attempt” and the technique is also known as “direct painting”. It is used mainly in oil painting and involves finishing the picture while the paint is still wet. It is suited to subjects that need to be painted quickly, such as this perishable still life.

With an alla prima picture, you want to avoid the paint ‘sinking’ in to the support too quickly, otherwise it will speed the drying process. To avoid this, I recommend painting on Raymar linen panels or a plywood board primed with PVA glue and gesso primer. To prevent your paint from drying too quickly you also can add some medium to them – I recommend walnut oil, as well as some odourless turps.

### LIZET’S MATERIALS

#### • OILS

Titanium White, Cadmium Yellow, Yellow Ochre, Cadmium Red, Alizarin Crimson, Ultramarine Blue, Raw Umber and Ivory Black, all Blockx Extra Fine Oil Colours and Old Holland Classic Oil Colours

#### • BRUSHES

A selection of filbert and flat brushes, sizes 1 to 6

#### • SUPPORT

Raymar linen panel, 20x30cm

#### • WALNUT OIL

#### • TURPS

**1** Begin by making sure your light source is constant and coming from one direction only; if you have a lot of diffused light, you won’t be able to see the shapes of the shadows very well, which will hinder your drawing. Also ensure your board is attached securely to your easel, and your easel is upright. Prime your canvas with a very neutral and fast-drying colour – I use Raw Umber. This layer should still be wet when you start the painting itself.

**2** The basis of every good painting is the drawing. I always draw with Raw Umber and ensure my drawing is accurate before I begin adding the other colour. I usually start my drawing by noting some rough measurements, like the top, bottom and sides of my subject, before drawing the shadow shapes and wiping out the lights by removing the Raw Umber layer with a sheet of paper towel.

**3** Now it is time to put down some colour. Start with the lightest value: your lightest light. In this painting, that was a Titanium White based mix with a bit of Cadmium Yellow and Cadmium Red, and a tiny amount of Ultramarine Blue to grey things slightly. Likewise, for my darkest dark, I used Ivory Black with tiny amounts of the other colours added. Block in the shadows with a single flat colour.





*Top tip*  
**DON'T APPLY THE RAW UMBER DRAWING LAYER TOO THICKLY OR IT WILL MUDDY THE COLOURS**

**4** It is time to start covering the whole board. Try to squint at your subject, comparing your mixes to your lightest light and darkest dark. There is no need to put down any details at this stage; you should be aiming for an overall impression of the object. Aim to use the biggest brush you feel comfortable with.

**5** If you make a mistake in the drawing or choice of colours, use a palette knife to scrape off the excess paint, then mix up the new colour and put it down in a single stroke. Avoid just making multiple marks in the hopes it will get better as this can result in a muddy painting. Make sure you have a clean brush and fresh mixes on your palette too.

**6** Now that you have covered the entire image in colour and you are happy with the drawing and the overall impression, start breaking everything down a bit. Reinstall

your lightest lights and your darkest dark with a clean, synthetic brush – they can cut through the muddiness and add a fresh touch.

**7** With all the colours in the correct place, start looking at edges. Try to find a very sharp transition; this can be in the background or anywhere else on the painting. Now compare every edge to this one: is it slightly softer or harder? And by how much? You will see edges are often softer than you think and have great variety.

**8** If everything went well, you will only have to scan over your painting at this stage and add little details here and there. I normally start with a size 2 flat brush and then switch to a very fine sable for the minute details.

**Lizet teaches a Cast Drawing Masterclass at the London Atelier of Representational Art from 20-24 June.**  
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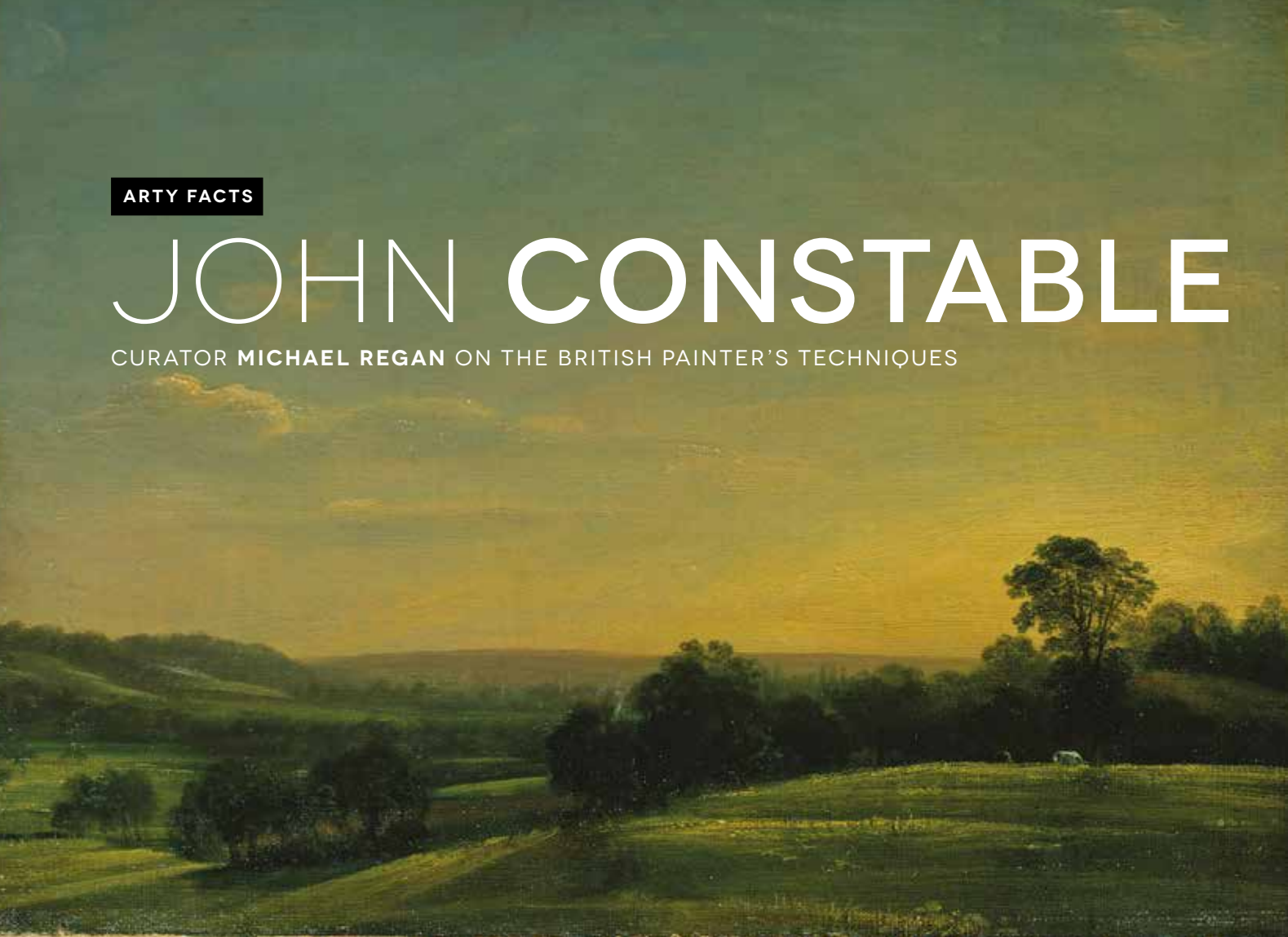
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# JOHN CONSTABLE

CURATOR MICHAEL REGAN ON THE BRITISH PAINTER'S TECHNIQUES



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## 1

### HE TIPPED LANDSCAPE PAINTING ON ITS HEAD

John Constable was one of the first artists of the Romantic era to view landscapes for their own beauty, rather than as a backdrop for a historical or mythological scene. Insisting on painting directly from nature rather than his imagination, Constable believed that one needed a combination of direct observation, experience, imagination and scientific understanding in order to create works that were true to nature.

## 2

### HE WAS A PIONEER OF THE OPEN-AIR TECHNIQUE

Though initially following in the footsteps of other artists with his habit of sketching outdoors in spring and summer, it soon became apparent that Constable's plein-air studies were nothing less than revolutionary. The artist transformed the genre of oil sketching from one used for simply recording landscape motifs to a means of capturing transient and subtle effects of light and atmosphere. His pioneering technique found a receptive audience in France, inspiring a whole generation of painters,

## 4

### HE WAS A PRINTMAKER PAR EXCELLENCE

Towards the end of his life, Constable devoted considerable time to printmaking and publishing in order to circulate and ensure the longevity of his paintings. Constable particularly favoured the mezzotint technique, a form of tonal engraving, because the medium enabled him to reproduce effects of light and shade that perfectly fitted his notions of *chiaroscuro* – or 'light and shade'.

## 3

### HE BECAME A METEOROLOGIST

Constable regarded his art as a form of experimental science and he sought to keep up with the latest meteorological research (including Luke Howard's classification of clouds) in order to make his paintings of skies more believable. Many of the 100 or more sketches produced during Constable's remarkable 'skying period' featured very detailed weather notes written on the back.

## 5

### HIS MARK-MAKING WAS UNIQUE

When prevailing academic standards dictated that the surface of a painting should be smooth and refined, Constable's 'six-footers' featured craggy areas of brushwork that alternated with passages of subtle translucence. He flicked paint to suggest light flickering across the landscape or reflecting off the surface of water. Suspicious critics describing the technique as 'Constable's snow'. Michael is the curator of *John Constable: Observing the Weather*, which runs from 13 February to 8 May at The Lightbox, Woking. [www.thelightbox.org.uk](http://www.thelightbox.org.uk)

ABOVE John Constable, *Dedham Vale Evening*, 1802, oil on canvas, 32x43cm



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