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If there is a theme to this month's *Leisure Painter* it has to be experimentation this summer – and finding ways and techniques that help you to become more playful

and relaxed when painting. I pulled out Nina Squire's words this month (below) as a way of reminding myself that it doesn't always have to be about the end result – the creative journey, with all its highs and lows, is just as important as finishing the artwork. Join Nina on the beach to learn the ways she uses soft pastels to fill her sketchbooks; a medium we don't often pair with sketching outdoors. I think the key here is not being too concerned about the result (although as you'd expect the work in Nina's sketchbooks looks stunning) – and embracing the scene around you. Nina uses splashes and drips to help portray a sense of where she is, and makes marks that capture the energy and atmosphere of the place. So that's how pastels and sketchbooks become the perfect combination.

The coast encourages experimentation. With soft pastel and a bit of sea breeze, you're almost forced to be more expressive – marks become more gestural, colours bolder, and ideas more playful.
Nina Squire

Also in this issue is a plethora of summer-inspired colour, and techniques to take you through painting seasonal landscapes, dramatic skies, delicate flowers, quirky still lifes, and one characterful alpaca! Hazel Money, for instance, uses bubble wrap and newspaper along with a painting knife and paintbrush to create texture and interest in her acrylic heathland demonstration, which hints at semi-abstract, while David Webb discusses the six steps he uses to paint from photographs. Here, preparation is key, from choosing the right colours and format to making tonal and colour studies.

To complement Nina's sketchbook theme, Naomi Jenkin takes you in detail through the painting of a breaking wave, demonstrating how to recreate a sense of movement in a finished painting, and Colin Joyce uses watercolour techniques to paint dramatic skies that he says shouldn't take more than two or three minutes

to complete in watercolour. Time to practice, I guess!

Step into the spirit of summer, enjoy the sunshine, and use the relaxed feeling that ensues to permeate your own creativity.

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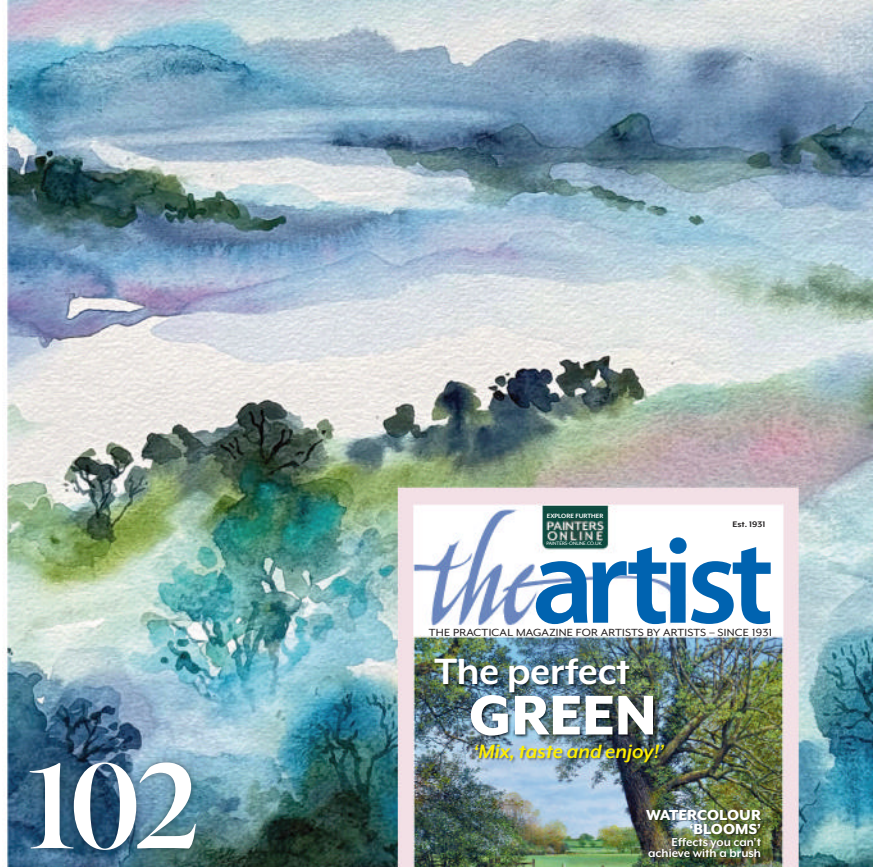
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Editor's choice

Step back in time to celebrate the life and work of Jane Austen on the 250th anniversary of her birth

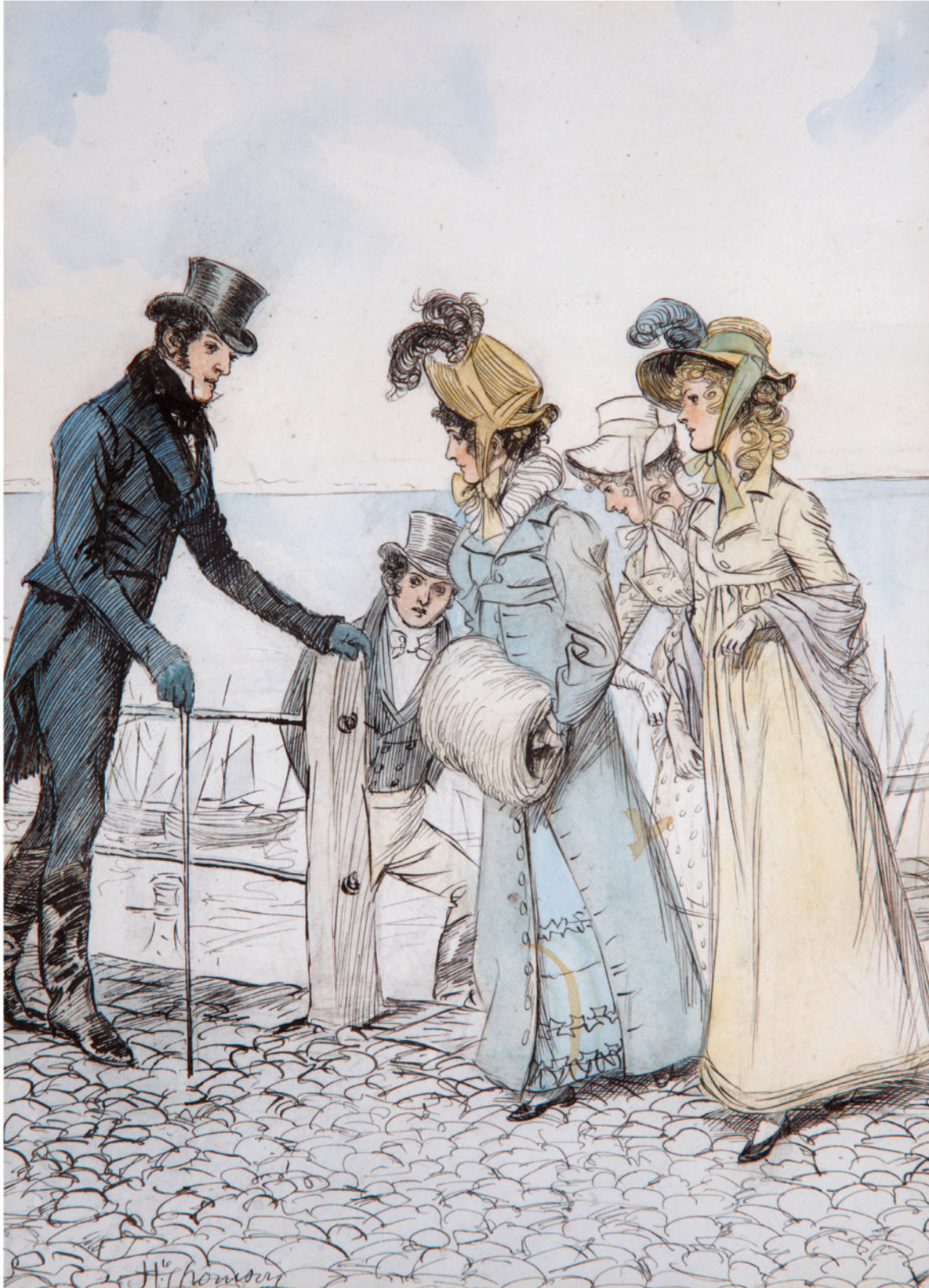


IMAGE: A **gentleman politely drew back**, by Hugh Thompson for *Persuasion*. Watercolour. © Jane Austen's House, Chawton.

In celebration of 250 years since the birth of one of the UK's greatest writers, 'Jane Austen: Down to the Sea' will be on show at Dorset Museum and Art Gallery, Dorchester, until 14 September. Bringing together paintings, costumes, letters, objects and more, the exhibition explores the theme of the sea in Austen's novels, in how it influenced and impacted on her as an author, and its roll in Britain's Regency era. For more details and opening times, visit dorsetmuseum.org

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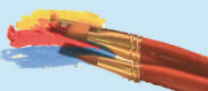
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Spotlight on art

A round-up of events and ideas to enjoy live and online

Spotted by the editor

Summer in the sun. As a huge fan of the work of the Bloomsbury Group and Charleston, I'll be visiting Charleston (Firle) for the 'Festival of the Garden 2025' (17-20 July), bringing together artists, gardeners, activists and designers for talks, performances, walks and workshops. charleston.org.uk



Visit 'Festival of the Garden' at Charleston this year (photograph: Lewis Ronald)

MEET THE ARTISTS

Worcestershire's 10th Art Week (16-25 August) worcestershireopenstudios.org
Warwickshire Art Weeks (21 June to 6 July) warwickshireopenstudios.org
Cambridge Open Studios (throughout July) camopenstudios.org
Devon Open Studios (6-21 September) devonartistnetwork.co.uk



Here's a good opportunity to visit artists' studios and watch them work at Worcestershire's 10th Art Week. Above, Laura Nicholson's studio in Colwall, in the beautiful Malvern Hills

The rise of the young
Tate Modern marked its 25th anniversary last month with a weekend of art,

performances, talks, screenings and workshops. Out of the 76,000 people who visited the event from Friday to Sunday, over 70-per-cent were under 35-years-old, reported the gallery, that's over double the 30-per-cent of under-35s typically seen at Tate Modern.

OVER 70%

A summer of painting

Explore the maritime heritage and the wildlife of the River Deben through art with the **Suffolk SketchFest (1-3 August)**, returning to Woodbridge with Art Safari. Painting outdoors, workshops, meet the artists, and more artsafari.com/uk-workshop/suffolk-sketchfest-2025

Plus... Explore *plein-air* painting at Moray Art Centre's summer school (until the end of August) in the striking setting of Findhorn Bay morayartcentre.org



Seagull, sketch by Claudia Myatt. Join fellow artists and tutors at this year's Suffolk SketchFest

Exhibition of the month

Summer Exhibition 2025 at the Royal Academy, London. Held every year since 1769, this is an annual show that can't be missed. Open until 17 September royalacademy.org.uk



Summer Exhibition 2024 at the Royal Academy of Arts, London
(photograph: Royal Academy of Arts, London/David Parry)

It's a dog's life!

International artists celebrate a love of dogs in this summer's exhibition at the Harley Gallery, Wellbeck, Worksop (open Tuesday to Sunday, from 12 July to 21 September). Check the website for opening times harleyfoundation.org.uk



Sally Muir **Tilly**, oil on board, 10x8in. (25x20.5cm). Tilly features in Sally's book, *Old Dogs*, and can be seen at 'A Dog's Life' at the Harley Gallery this summer

HAVE YOUR SAY

Share your opinion on something art related or recommend a product, medium or technique. Contact ingrid@tapc.co.uk for your chance to be featured here.

Found on the web

There's so much of interest for artists to discover on the Natural History Museum's website, from scientific and natural history illustrations to 'Nature's colours: from page to paint' nhm.ac.uk/discover/



The Natural History Museum
(photograph: The Trustees of the Natural History Museum, London)

Seen on Painters Online

Found in the gallery of our website, Painters Online – the artwork of animal painter, Daryl Haynes. Watercolour brings the faces of his subjects to life. See more of his work at daryl-haynes-art.co.uk

Daryl Haynes **Saluki**, watercolour, 8 1/4x11 1/2in. (21x29cm)



One to... read

Spend the summer observing and painting nature with the help of *Sketching Nature: The Beginner's Guide to Keeping a Botanical Sketchbook* by Dianne Sutherland (Search Press) searchpress.com



Be inspired by Dianne Sutherland's new book

One to... visit

Visiting the British Museum this summer (perhaps for 'Hiroshige: Artist of the Open', until 7 September)? Call in at L. Cornelissen & Son nearby for another visual and artistic treat. (Cornelissen has been supplying pure pigments and fine art materials to artists at all stages of their careers since 1855.) cornelissen.com



The pigment wall at L. Cornelissen & Son

One to... try

Just launched, Diamine's nano-particle Forever Ink – vibrant, quick drying, lightfast and permanent (see pages 41-43) diamineinks.co.uk



A new launch from Diamine – Forever Inks

Coming your way

Leisure Painter & The Artist is much more than a magazine. Want to learn more about mixing colours for summer landscapes? Sign up to read an email on the subject at Bit.ly/POL_Email



Six lessons in the landscape

Part 1 David Webb discusses reference photos, sketches, colours and more before he puts brush to paper in the September issue

I love to take a sketchbook with me when I'm out in the countryside. I can make detailed drawings, quick watercolour sketches, or add just a few brief marks with a pencil or pen to remind me of the scene. I may sketch an entire vista or simply concentrate on details then, back in the studio, I use these jottings to create more finished paintings.

There are times, however, when I

pass an interesting scene but don't have the time or opportunity to sketch it, or I'll see something that could make a good subject for a painting, but the spot where I need to stand isn't safe enough to spend any amount of time sketching in. This is when the ability to take a photograph is such an asset. Of course, these days mobile phones include cameras so, in the situations above, if a paintable subject

presents itself, I can at least take a photo as a record.

In the following article, I explain six ways that I prepare to paint a scene of a Somerset bridge from a photograph I took while out walking.

You will learn

How to **take and use reference photos**
Traditional (**pure**) **watercolour techniques**
The value of **tonal and colour sketches**

How to take a good reference photo

This view of Gallox Bridge (below), once known as Gallows Bridge, was taken on my phone. Gallox Bridge dates from the 15th century and crosses the River Avill, in Somerset. It was originally used for the transportation of fleeces and other goods from Exmoor to the nearby market village of Dunster.

Most mobile phones take photos and video at a 9x16 aspect ratio, which is the same format as

most modern TVs. This is useful, as it allows us to include a lot of information in one photo, however, it is not a conventional format for paintings. Of course, there is nothing wrong with painting in this format. The photo below shows the scene in its entirety and, if you wanted to create a more panoramic scene, you could paint it without too much in the way of cropping.

I try to compose my photos as

BELOW: The original photo and a red box showing how much is lost when cropped to a 11x15in. ratio

I would if I were sketching the scene and, as you can see, I placed the bridge on the top third of the picture area, which gives me plenty of interest in the foreground. If it helps, most phone cameras have an optional grid that you can switch on. It divides your screen into horizontal and vertical thirds. The grid isn't visible in the final photo.

I mainly paint on quarter Imperial (11x15in.) or sometimes half Imperial (15x22in.) sheets of watercolour paper, and the red box on the photo shows how much of the original photo area is lost when I crop it to the same proportions as a quarter Imperial sheet. This is not a problem though as, even if I were working from sketches, I would invariably change elements to improve the composition. I might zoom in or zoom out, or remove features that I feel do not enhance the look of the scene (that red doggy bin on the left, for instance, will have to go). I may also introduce a feature nearby that, although wasn't visible in my field of view, creates balance by its inclusion in the painting.



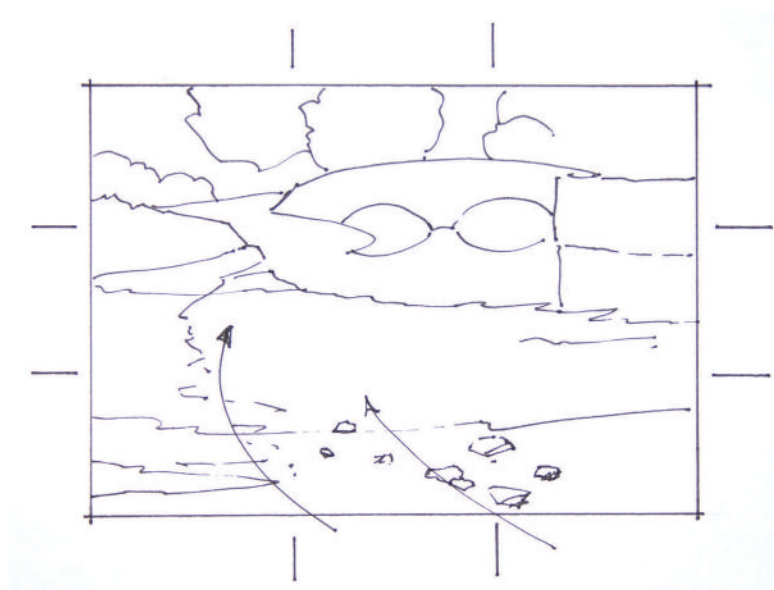
How to figure out a composition

For this article and the demonstration painting (next month) I will be using a sheet of quarter Imperial sized paper (11x15in.), which means that I will have to crop down the original scene (see photo reference, below left). It's tempting to dive straight in and make a direct copy of the reference, but there are a few things I like to figure out before I start working on the watercolour paper. First and foremost is the composition.

Even if I have a good reference photo, I like to make a few preliminary sketches. This view of the bridge lent itself to a landscape format rather than a portrait orientation. To make the scene fit a 11x15in. format, I needed to move closer to the bridge and crop the sides. In my work I like to concentrate on the larger shapes within a scene and try to capture a sense of atmosphere. I am less concerned with minute details so, at this stage, I decided what was needed and what I could simplify. To help me do this I created a small compositional line drawing (above right).

What originally drew me to this scene was the shape of the ancient bridge with its two arches, along with its mirror-like reflection. The photo was taken just before midday, which is not the best time of day to paint a scene but, despite this, there are some

RIGHT: This simple compositional sketch concentrates on the main shapes and shows directional lines that lead the viewer into the scene



lovely areas of sunlight and shade. I also like the way that the left-hand side of the river's edge leads us into the scene from the foreground and up to the bridge.

In the foreground are rocks breaking the surface of the water. These, too, add interest to the lower part of the picture and, with a little rearranging, can also direct the viewer's eye into the picture. On the outside of the sketch, you can see I made marks to indicate the horizontal and vertical thirds. As previously

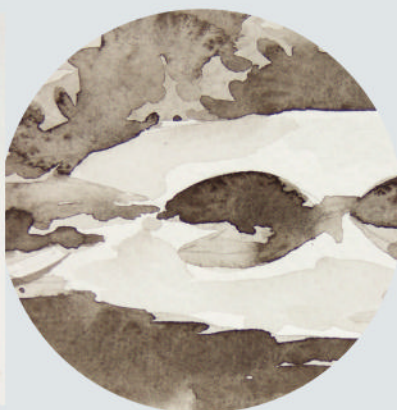
mentioned, the bridge lies roughly along the top third. If there had been more interest in the upper part of the scene, such as a dramatic sky, I might have placed the bridge at the lower third to give the sky more prominence.

As well as the placement of features in your picture frame, another important consideration is the tonal values. If I had to list the points to take into account when I'm painting, design would be first, but tonal values would be a very close second.

How to make a 20-minute tonal sketch

The ability to identify the different tonal values within a scene, from the lightest lights to the darkest darks, then translate them in watercolour is vital. Tonal values are important regardless of medium. However, I paint in the pure watercolour tradition, which means that I rely on the whiteness of the paper and the purity of the transparent washes

BELOW: A monotone sketch helps me to visualise the areas of light, medium and dark – and the detail (below right) shows the nuances of tone



to build up the painting, and so this is especially important to me and my way of working.

I start with the lightest tones and work my way up to the darkest therefore, if I have a good idea of what is going on tonally, I know that I have a better chance of success. So, whether I am working on-site or using a photo for reference, I invariably create a small

tonal value sketch to work out the tones beforehand (below left). You could use pencil, charcoal, pen or any other medium for this but, as I am going to be painting the scene in watercolour, it is more useful to use the same medium for the tonal sketch as it helps me to visualise how the painting will progress. I can also tell at this stage how light or dark I should make each wash. There's no need to spend too much time on this. It's not going to be framed! This sketch is only 4½x6½in. and took me 20 minutes to complete.

When I make a tonal sketch, I try to visualise the scene in three main tonal values: light, medium and dark. There could be many more tones in a scene, of course, but traditionally artists identify nine: three tonal values within the light area, three in the mid-tones, and three that fall within the darkest.

How to create nuanced shadows

When using photos as a source of reference, one thing to watch out for is that in bright and sunny conditions, the darkest shadow areas can appear as black in a photo. In fact, if you look at the Gallox Bridge photo, you will notice that the darkest areas of shadow, under the arches and the trees above the bridge do, in fact, look black, but this is not the case. If you had been present at the time when the photo was taken, you would have seen that even the darkest areas of shadow contained light and colour.

The reason that the shadows appear black is a photographic one. In bright conditions, cameras struggle to expose a full range of tonal values accurately. On auto-settings they will take an average reading of the scene, which means that tonal values at the extreme ends of the tonal scale can be either over or underexposed.

I've seen examples of paintings where the artist has slavishly copied the tones in their photo reference and ended up with jet black shadows, which do not look right. If you make a little tonal sketch however, you can work out these problems beforehand. You'll see that in my sketch I lifted the darkest shadows in the background trees so that we can still see light.



How to make good colour choices

With our composition and tonal values now established, there is one more thing I like to think about before getting on with the final painting, and this is my choice of colours. At the present time I have 13 colours in my palette. These are:

- Cerulean blue
- Ultramarine blue
- Cobalt blue
- Opera rose
- Alizarin crimson
- Light red
- French vermilion
- Raw umber
- Burnt sienna
- Lemon yellow (transparent version)
- Indian yellow
- Raw sienna
- Quinacridone gold

You'll notice that most of my colours are primaries – warm and cool versions of blue, red and yellow – and I don't have ready-made greens as I prefer to mix my own. I only

use a handful of these colours for any one painting though. My choice of which ones to use depends on the light conditions of the scene or the mood that I am trying to portray in the painting.

For a great many paintings, I use three colours but, on average, I tend to work with four to six. Why though? A quick look at a leading artists' materials' website shows that I could buy a set of 45 watercolours if I wanted to. I could then dip into any colour that I wanted. Why not do that? Yes, that is an option and, when I first started painting with watercolour many years ago, I did do just that. The results were pretty awful and garish. So, after many years of painting, I found that using a limited palette results in a far more pleasing and natural-looking outcome.

Most of the colours in my palette are transparent. As my paintings are composed of a series of transparent washes, it makes sense not to include opaque colours that may block the washes that you have already applied.

TOP TIP

The range of secondary colours that result from mixing a limited range of mostly primary colours, have a harmonious quality about them and nothing tends to jar.



TOP ROW: Cerulean blue, cobalt blue, ultramarine, opera rose, alizarin crimson, light red

BOTTOM ROW: French vermilion, raw umber, burnt sienna, lemon yellow (transparent version), Indian yellow, raw sienna, and quinacridone gold

How to make a 30-minute colour sketch

Once again, it makes sense for me to create a small watercolour sketch to accompany the tonal sketch. If I'm using a photo as reference, I usually print it out as I find it easier than working from a screen, such as PC, tablet or phone. Every printer is different and so, once again, we can't take the colours too literally. They will only be as true as the printer that they are printed on. I find that greens tend to print out a bit more vivid than I remember from the scene, especially if photographed in strong sunlight, as here.

I used five colours for this sketch (see right):

- Cobalt blue
- Opera rose
- Burnt sienna
- Raw sienna
- Quinacridone gold.

This is just a quick, small sketch, painted the same size as the monotone, to see how my chosen colours will work together and what mixes are possible. I have a couple of yellows here, quinacridone and raw sienna, plus cobalt blue, which provide me with a variety of greens, none of which are too vivid. I also chose burnt sienna and opera rose. Cobalt blue mixed with opera rose creates a

transparent purple, which I often use in shadows. It is an especially useful mix for toning down greens.

Again, this little sketch is just for establishing our colour scheme for the final painting. I spent half an hour on this one. For both, I used a No. 2 synthetic mop, which is quite large for a small sketch, but it helps stop me obsessing over details. 

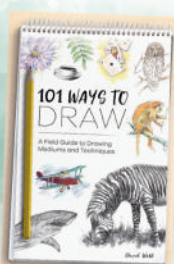


ABOVE LEFT: David's colour choice for next month's painting: cobalt blue, opera rose, burnt sienna, raw sienna and quinacridone gold

LEFT: David's small colour sketch using the five colours on his list. This measures 4½x6½in. (11.5x16.5cm)

Discover more

Find David's books, including *101 Ways to Draw* and *Complete Guide to Watercolour* in our online shop at painters-online.co.uk/ArtSupplies



David Webb

David is a professional artist and tutor based in the south west of England. He has written several books including *Complete Guide to Watercolour* (Search Press). Visit davidwebbart.co.uk or find on YouTube at David Webb Art.

Add the sparkle

How to capture the movement and energy of sea waves in bright sunshine using easy pastel techniques, with **Naomi Jenkin**

The finished painting *Sun-kissed Swell*, pastel on Pastelmat, 11x15in. (28x38cm)




The ocean is a fantastic subject; it encourages a loose, expressive style and teaches you how to capture light, energy and movement. If seascape painting is something you'd love to try, I highly recommend spending time observing the sea, as watching and immersing yourself in the environment will help you understand how water behaves. Notice how waves build and break, light interacts with the water, the colours shift as the water moves, and the way foam patterns trail across the surface.

We'll be working from one of my own reference photos (below right): a wave breaking near the shore on a sunny day with a moderate offshore breeze. The image is composed using the rule of thirds, with a

distinct foreground, a focal wave cresting in the middle third, and the backdrop being completed by distant ocean and sky.

Choice of surface

For this piece, I've chosen Pastelmat, my go-to surface for soft pastels. It allows for many

layers of pastel without becoming saturated, which is crucial for achieving realistic depth and detail. It comes in many different shades, but I've chosen the maize shade for this piece as the lovely warm tone of the paper will work to add vibrancy to the artwork, enhancing the sunlit atmosphere of the seascape. 

How to create a dramatic seascape

You will learn

- **Pastel techniques to recreate movement**
- How to direct **the viewer's eye** around the painting when there is no focal point
- **To blend** using your fingers or a tool

You will need

Surface

- Pastelmat paper (maize shade) 11x15in. (28x38cm)

Soft pastels

- **Unison:** dark 18, grey 34, green 4, green 5, blue violet 9, blue violet 14, blue violet 2, grey 28
- **Rembrandt:** green grey TR709.7, permanent green deep TR619.5, cinnabar green deep TR627.2, blue green TR640.2, bluish grey TR727.3, bluish grey TR727.5, Prussian blue TR508.7, phthalo green TR675.8
- Soft tool sponge bar

TOP TIP

You don't need to use the specific colours mentioned above. Simply pick out your own blues, greens, violets and greys to recreate this scene to make it more your own.

Step 1

Start with a sketch to outline the basic structure: the horizon, the main breaking wave, and the white-water wave in the foreground. Keep it simple.

Step 2

1 Use the side edge of blue violet 9 for the upper sky and blue violet 14 near the horizon. Add soft clouds with grey 28 using medium pressure. Lighten just above the

horizon line by gently dragging the edge of the grey 28 across the surface. (Image 2a.)

2 Use a sponge bar with light pressure to blend the sky. Feather the edges of the clouds into the blue sky for a natural effect. (Image 2b.)

Step 3

1 With dark 18, make horizontal marks to block in the sea near the horizon. Keep the horizon line straight and make the pastel

Your reference photo (photographer: Naomi Jenkin)



TOP TIP

Don't be afraid to break your pastel sticks into shorter pieces; they're easier to use on their sides this way for smaller areas.

dense here to create a dark horizon line. As you move farther down in this section, lighten the pressure and leave some areas of paper exposed. Fill these gaps using Prussian blue and add touches of permanent green deep.

2 Using a clean side of the sponge bar, gently blend the area of colour, starting at the horizon line. You want the horizon line to be slightly fuzzy, as it needs to be out-of-focus. This can be achieved by using careful side-to-side movements with the sponge bar. Blend the rest of this area in the same way.

3 Add ripples with small horizontal marks using the Prussian blue and permanent deep green. Use the reference photo for guidance on where to place them. Blend lightly with your finger.

Step 4

1 Moving on to the breaking wave, as before, be mindful of your mark making to help convey a sense of movement. When a

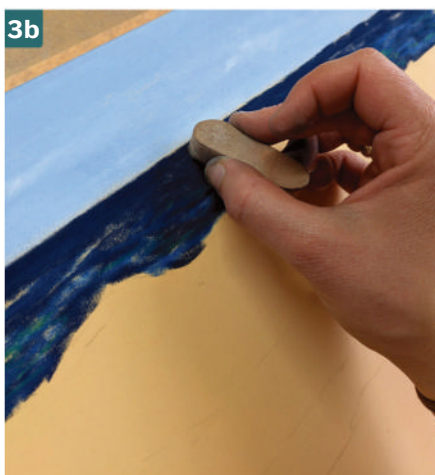
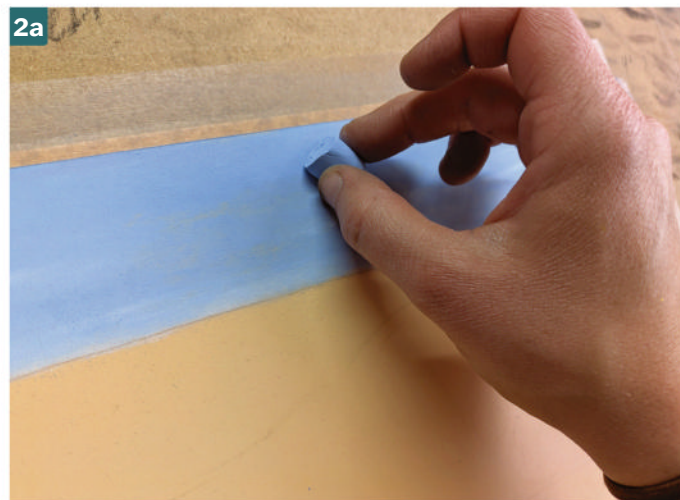
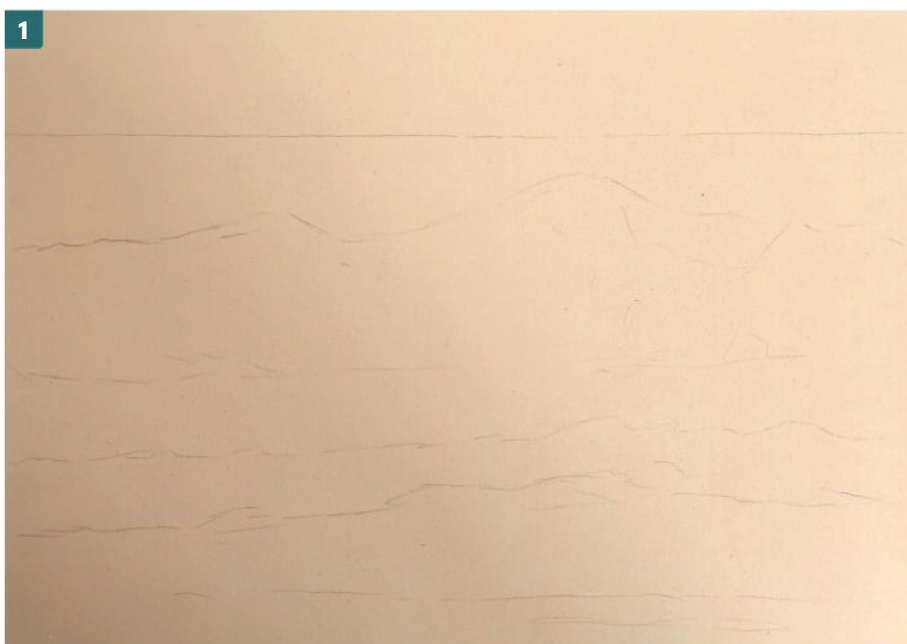
wave breaks, water is drawn up the face of the wave before curling over and crashing down, creating a circular motion. With this in mind, block in the colours of the green wave face, making marks that follow the same direction as the water's movement.

2 Use a mix of blue green, permanent green deep, cinnabar green deep, and bluish grey for the base of the wave where

the water is darkest. As you move up, switch to green 4 and 5 for the lighter, sunlit areas. Just beneath the lip of the wave, use the bluish grey pastels to block in the line of shadow.

Step 5

1 The flat water just below the breaking wave is a mixture of blue-greys with foam



tendrils swirling around on top. Block in the colour for the water using a mixture of both bluish greys and grey 34. Make horizontal marks to mimic the ripples of the flat water.

2 Also use grey 34 and blue violet 2 at this stage to block in the darkest areas of white-water where the wave is breaking.

3 Blend the colours gently with the Sofft sponge bar. Move the sponge bar in the direction that the water is travelling to maintain the sense of movement.

Step 6

1 Next, add lighter highlights to the top section of the wave to intensify those beautiful turquoise hues. Using green 5, make small and varied marks to suggest the undulating surface of the water.

2 Blend these in with your finger, applying firm pressure to smooth out the colour changes.

3 Use blue violet 2 to block in the lighter

areas of the white water where the wave is breaking. Blend this in with the sponge bar using short strokes.

Step 7

1 Block in the foreground flat water, using the same technique as you did for the flat water beneath the breaking wave. This area is slightly lighter in tone so use grey 34 as the main colour, adding bluish grey to suggest the darker ripples.

2 Just beneath the white-water wave, introduce shadow using bluish grey and blue green.

3 Blend with the sponge bar, using horizontal strokes to echo the water's ripples.

TOP TIP

Use a separate side of the sponge bar for dark and light colours.
Press any loose dust into the paper with your finger.

Step 8

1 For the foreground white water, block in with blue violet 2 and bluish grey using short, varied strokes to create a chaotic foam texture. Use your reference photo to guide shadow placement.

2 Blend using the sponge bar with short, random sponge strokes to keep the illusion of energetic movement.

Step 9

1 Now you have your base layer of colour blocked in, start building up the finer details to make the drawing come to life. Using blue violet 2, add the line of white foam along the crest of the wave and add the tendrils



of foam snaking down the wave face. Use the end of the grey 28 pastel to add white highlights along the lip of the wave.

2 Use the side of grey 28 and gently scrape it upwards from the wave's lip with light pressure to create spray.

3 Soften with your finger then repeat to build the effect.

Step 10

1 Continuing along the surface of the wave, add more foam tendrils and highlights, using blue violet 2 and grey 28 for the sunlit areas, and switching to bluish grey for the shaded areas.

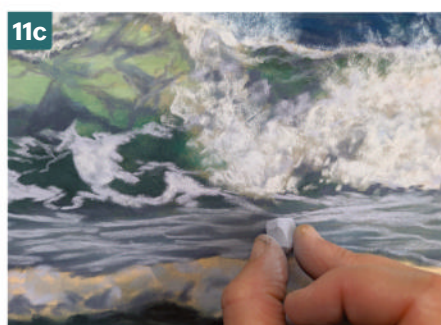
2 Smooth these with your little finger.

Step 11

1 Add more white foam where the wave has broken using grey 28. Use the same short chaotic mark making that you used for blocking in the white-water wave in step 4.

Add spray coming off the top as before.

2 On the flat water below the wave, draw foam tendrils with blue violet 2 then



highlight with grey 28. Lightly smooth any rough textures with your little finger.

Step 12

To introduce even more liveliness and energy, add drops of water being thrown into the air by the wind. In the areas where there's spray, use grey 28 to make small bright white marks.

Step 13

1 Moving down to the white-water wave in the foreground, add chaotic short circular marks to imitate bubbling foam using grey 28. Add a few water droplets being blown off the top as before.

2 Draw in the foam tendrils on the surface of the foreground flat water using blue violet 2 and grey 28. Then add subtle reflections of the sky using blue violet 14 into both the foreground and middle section flat water areas. Blend these softly with your finger.

Step 14

Finally, to encourage the viewer's focus to move through the foreground towards

Discover more

Studio members can watch Naomi as she paints a chimpanzee in pastel in the Studio Video section of our website at painters-online.co.uk Want to know more about painting seascapes? You'll also find a variety of demonstrations in gouache, watercolour and acrylics in the same area.



the focal point of the breaking wave, make the foreground flat water out of focus. To do this, using a clean finger and firm pressure, blend the pastel using long side-to-side movements.

In conclusion

I hope you've enjoyed this tutorial and found it helpful. You can see how the way you make your marks, choose your colours, and understand your subject all play a huge part in creating energy and movement in your work. I hope you have fun experimenting with your own drawings!



Naomi Jenkin

Naomi is a professional artist, based in Cornwall. She sells paintings and limited-edition prints of her artwork, examples of which can be seen on her website: naomijenkinart.com You can also find Naomi on Instagram and Facebook @naomijenkinart



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Buttercups & bluebells

Part 2 Following last month's preliminary drawing and colour-mixing exercises, **Julie King** takes you through the completion of spring flowers in pen & wash

Step 1

See last month's issue for a detailed look at how to draw this scene. Use either pencil first, or go straight in with a permanent ink pen.

Step 2 THE BUTTERCUPS

1 Prepare pools of:

- A dilute transparent yellow.
- A creamier mix of cadmium yellow.
- A warmer golden shade of yellow made up

of a mix of cadmium yellow plus a touch of scarlet lake.

- A pale green mix of transparent yellow with a touch of Winsor blue (green shade).

The finished painting *Buttercups and Bluebells*, watercolour, 8¼x11¾in. (21x30cm)



You will learn

- **Colour mixing** for flower painting
- How to work with **transparent colours**
- To paint **wet on dry** and **wet on damp**

You will need

Surface

- Saunders Waterford 140lb NOT paper
- 8¼x11¼in. (21x30cm)

Winsor & Newton Professional watercolours

(see colours, below)

Brushes

- Pro Arte Prolene Series 101 rounds, Nos. 4 & 8

Miscellaneous

- Permanent black Staedtler pigment liner pen No. 0.5
- Graphite pencil B
- Eraser
- Masking tape
- Paper towel



Reference photo

Download a reference photo with the following link bit.ly/AUG25REF or by scanning the QR code



Your reference photo



1



Transparent yellow



French ultramarine blue



Cadmium yellow



Permanent rose



Winsor blue (green shade)



Scarlet lake



2a



2b

2 Working wet on dry, draw a loaded No. 8 brush of transparent yellow from the outer edge of the petals inwards, leaving gaps of white paper. (Image 2a.)

3 Whilst still damp, use the cadmium yellow mix and the same brush to draw in the direction of the curve of the petal here and there. (Image 2b.)

4 Drop in hints of the green mix with the point of the brush. (Image 2c.)

Step 3

Using a smaller No. 4 brush add a pale wash of a green mix of transparent yellow plus Winsor blue (green shade) into the centres of the buttercups and when dry add a stronger mix of the same colour. If the green appears too bright, add a hint of scarlet lake to tone it down. Finally, apply the golden yellow mix loosely over the stamens.

Step 4 THE BLUEBELLS

1 Prepare three pools of purple:

- A pink-mauve made up of permanent rose with a hint of French ultramarine.
- A stronger blue-mauve mix of French ultramarine with a touch of permanent rose.
- Dilute French ultramarine.

2 Using the point of the No. 8 brush, apply a wash of the pink-mauve over the entire base. While semi-dry, drop in the stronger mix of purple and a hint of French





ultramarine with the No. 4 brush so the different shades of purple blend together.
3 When nearly dry, apply a stronger mix of purple to the stamens and add detailing.

Step 5 THE WHITE BELLS

Prepare a mauve-grey of permanent rose and French ultramarine with a hint of cadmium yellow and apply on the shadowed areas on the white bells, using the No. 4 brush. Leave plenty of white paper. When dry, sweep in a green vein.

Step 6 THE GLASS VASE

1 Prepare a dilute wash of reddish-orange (scarlet lake and cadmium yellow) and add a tiny amount to a pool of Winsor blue (green shade) to make the blue less intense.

2 Apply a dilute wash in the glass vase with a No. 8 brush, leaving the stems and hints of white paper clear to suggest highlights.

Step 7

Prepare a green mix of ultramarine blue and transparent yellow and sweep over the stems.

Step 8

Observe the patterns created in the glass and water. Working wet on dry, add the deeper tones of the cool blue-grey mix on the surface of the water, and the base of the vase with Winsor blue (green shade) plus a little orange. Different proportions will produce varied shades. Remove the pencil lines, if any.

Step 9 THE BACKGROUND

1 Prepare a grey mix for the background. Add a yellow-orange mix (cadmium yellow plus a little scarlet lake) to French ultramarine blue. Dilute.

2 Apply with the No. 8 brush, wet on dry, leaving a gap of white paper around the flowerheads and stems.

3 Add a stronger brushstroke of green on to the shadowed side of the dry stems.

Discover more

Julie is the author of *Anyone Can Paint Watercolour Flowers* and *Take Three Colours: Watercolour Flowers*. Save money when you buy from our online bookshop at painters-online.co.uk/ArtSupplies



Step 10 THE FINISHING TOUCHES

1 Strengthen the reflections on the vase by adding a few sweeping brushstrokes of the Winsor blue and orange mix. A little pure Winsor blue (green shade) can also be introduced.

2 Add a pale wash wet on dry of similar colours to the vase on the table surface to indicate the cast shadow.

3 While semi-damp, add stronger tones on the cast shadow and balance the composition by adding a few brushstrokes with a dilute mauve-grey mix on the cloth, to indicate folds in the fabric.



Julie King

Find out more about Julie and her work by visiting julieking.co.uk

Loosen up your style

Part 2 How to add interesting textures to a landscape using bubble wrap, newspaper, knife and brush, by **Hazel Money**

A lot of people who are very good painters still hanker for a looser, more abstract approach to painting landscapes, but how do you stop yourself from wanting to copy every detail of your

source photograph? Putting your brushes down and using a few different techniques might be the answer. I hope you enjoy this quick demonstration and give the techniques a go. [LP](#)

The finished painting **Heathland, Arne**, acrylic on canvas, 11x15in. (27x38cm)



You will learn

- To **free up** your usual methods of painting
- To **simplify and change** elements
- To **experiment** with **different materials**

You will need



Surface

- Primed canvas or board
- 11x15in. (27x38cm)

Acrylics

- Yellow ochre (Liquitex Heavy Body)
- Cadmium yellow (Daler-Rowney System 3)
- Burnt sienna (Liquitex Heavy Body)
- Ultramarine blue (Liquitex Heavy Body)
- Titanium white (Atelier Interactive – in tub form is great)

Optional colours

- Mars black (Liquitex Heavy Body)
- Lemon yellow (Winsor & Newton)

Tools

- A medium-sized bristle brush, round or flat
- A painting knife

Miscellaneous

- Bubble wrap
- Newspaper
- Mixing palette; ceramic is best so an old tile or plate is good
- Water pot



Reference photo

Download a reference photo with the following link bit.ly/AUG25REF or by scanning the QR code



Your reference photo



Step 1

1 Start by ridding yourself of all that white. Pick a colour you like; I used raw sienna here but yellow ochre will do nicely. Thin it down with water and brush it about in all directions with a decorating brush to add a little texture. Let it dry completely before continuing.

2 Dilute burnt sienna with a little water, and draw the main features of the scene.

Step 2

While the drawing is drying, mix white and a little cadmium yellow and smear the colour sideways across the canvas with a painting knife. This should be a really bright

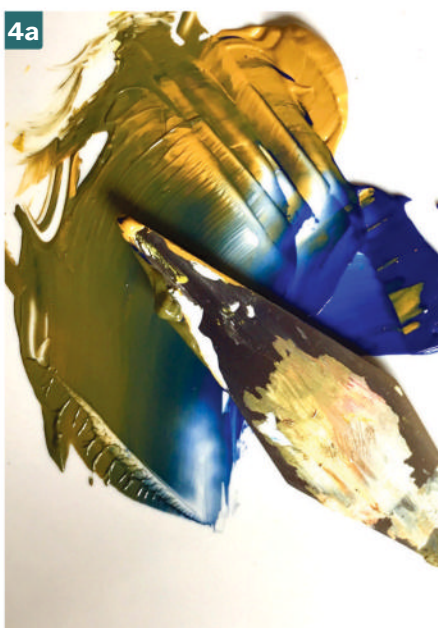
yellow that will become the sunlight shining through the gorse flowers. I found mine was a little too bright so added a touch of yellow

ochre and put more strokes on. Look at building up textures and don't worry about making a mess. Have fun!

TOP TIPS

There isn't much detail here so just focus on drawing the horizon, trees and the track leading away from you.

Take your time and make sure you are happy with the composition at this stage before proceeding. It is hard to correct a bad drawing with good painting!





TOP TIP

If you find that your trees are lacking depth, mix in a little lemon yellow then add more shapes; this should give it a cooler, more 'pine' hue. Let your brush dance on the canvas and apply this third shade here and there to add interest.

Step 3

Mix burnt sienna and ultramarine plus a little water and begin to add definition to the shape of the trees. Look for the direction of the branches, which way they are pointing, and the gaps between the branches. Keep your strokes random, sketchy and don't overwork this stage. If you make them too dark, they will shoot right into the foreground so add a little water to aid transparency. You can also start to drop a few shadows into the foreground gorse, too.

Step 4

Back to the foreground, mix green using yellow ochre with ultramarine blue and

sweep it about using a painting knife. Drag your knife gently across the surface and it will reward you with lots of arbitrary textures. Start to pick out larger dark shapes between the yellow flowers.



Step 5

- 1 While the greenery dries, let's go straight into the sky. Taking titanium white, add a very small touch of yellow ochre to warm it up then start to define the trees by picking your way along the horizon, looking for those negative shapes between the foliage.
- 2 Move upwards and add a little more yellow ochre as you fade up. Stop about halfway up the trees.
- 3 Add light to the surface of the track, taking care to leave a few sketchy areas half-uncovered.

TOP TIP

Enjoy this process and the way the paint describes features with the simplest of strokes. But don't overdo it!

Step 6

Don't forget to keep a colour swatch of each colour as you go along with notes of how you mixed it. You'll thank yourself later!



Step 7 - Let's stop for a moment here

Let's look back at the initial sketch I made last month. There were a lot more textures and contrasts, and more interesting, playful shapes I had picked out so it's time to invent some using a variety of different painting techniques.



Step 8

1 Mix burnt sienna into your sky colour and start to mark patterns in the sky; be inventive and create direction as you go. Keep altering the mix and you will end up with a series of different strokes, almost like a patchwork. I went backwards and forwards between brown and white to create movement here.

2 Next, pick up the painting knife and return to the white and yellow ochre mix. Sweep loose patches over the top to soften the patchwork look. Play with the tones and enjoy the thick textures made by your knife. Again, don't overwork it here – less is more!

Step 9 Bubble wrap

1 Next is the fun part! Dig out your bubble wrap and tear off a random-shaped piece.

2 Mix white with cadmium yellow and brush paint onto the raised areas of the packing then invert the plastic and push it gently into the area where the gorse is in flower.



3 Remember to keep re-inking and turning your plastic so that you don't repeat the patterns. These neat round yellow dots will add humour and a totally different feel to your work, so relax and have fun.

Step 10

If all this playing creates too many flowers and you find yourself getting carried away, return to the tree colour (burnt sienna and ultramarine) and brush a little here and there. Look for shadows to invent darker patches in the foreground.

Step 11

Although I decided to change the sky colour to yellow, a little blue at this stage will just help to define the distant horizon. Take ultramarine and white, and apply a small amount to the left-hand side of the horizon, behind the lone tree. If it turns out lilac in shade, try adding a small spot of lemon yellow. As this is only going to be used in one place, it might risk sticking out so while you are about it, dot a little around in random places to bring unity and keep the eye wandering around your painting. If you can't find anywhere much to unify your odd colour, try signing your name in it!

Step 13

Leave your picture to dry and set it to one side in your kitchen so that you can glance at it with a fresh eye later. You will see if you are pleased with your painting or if you need to make any minor improvements.



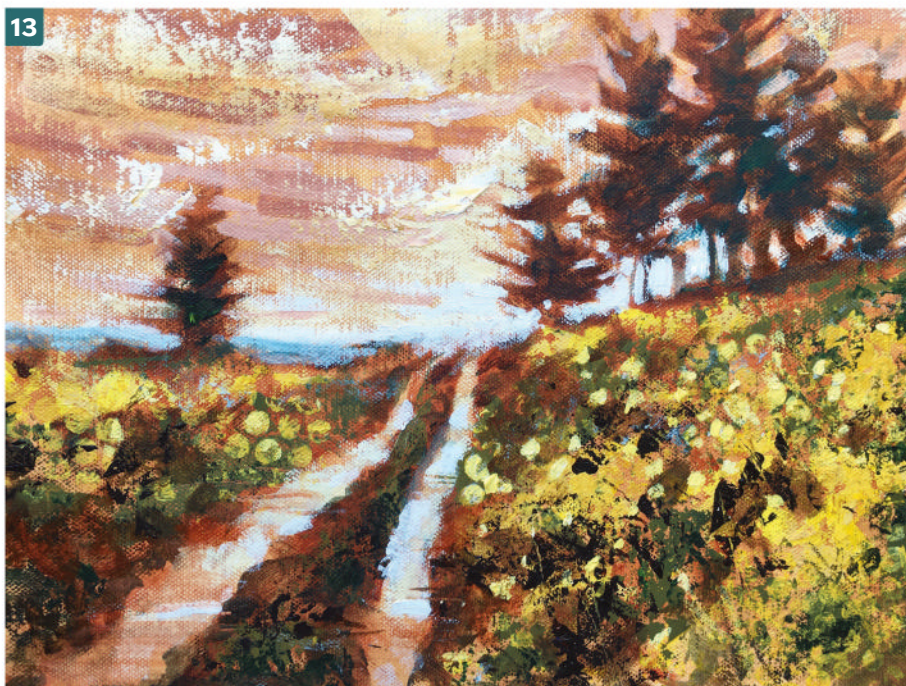
Hazel Money

Find out more about Hazel and her work, including an annual Summer Art School in the Peak District by visiting hazelmoney.co.uk or find her on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube at HazelMoneyArt

Step 12 Newspaper

Finally, we can try another different way of adding texture. At this stage, the central trees are still the darkest feature, and therefore seem rather close to us. We could try mixing a darker tone for the trees using ultramarine and burnt sienna, but you can't really get it to go much darker.

The answer is to try adding another colour, but at this late stage you may risk upsetting the balance with a totally new hue. So how about black? Black is 'colourless' and just a small spot of it might just do the trick. It's certainly not something I'd make a habit of but, in this case, it might just be what we need. Add a small amount to your tree mix of ultramarine and burnt sienna then take a piece of crumpled newspaper and dab it at random amongst the foreground foliage, scratching back with your painting knife to create extra textures. Instantly, you will see your trees take a step back into the middle-distance. Magic!



Discover more

Have you missed part 1 of this two-part project? You can find it in the July issue, available to Studio members online at painters-online.co.uk or go back to pages 20-21 for more details on how to join our friendly community.



Unlock the potential of Pastelmat

Helen Carter answers your questions and provides helpful guidance, tips and tricks for using this versatile medium. This month, smoothing and blending on Pastelmat

Question

I struggle to cover the texture of the surface I use with coloured pencils. What can I do?

Answer

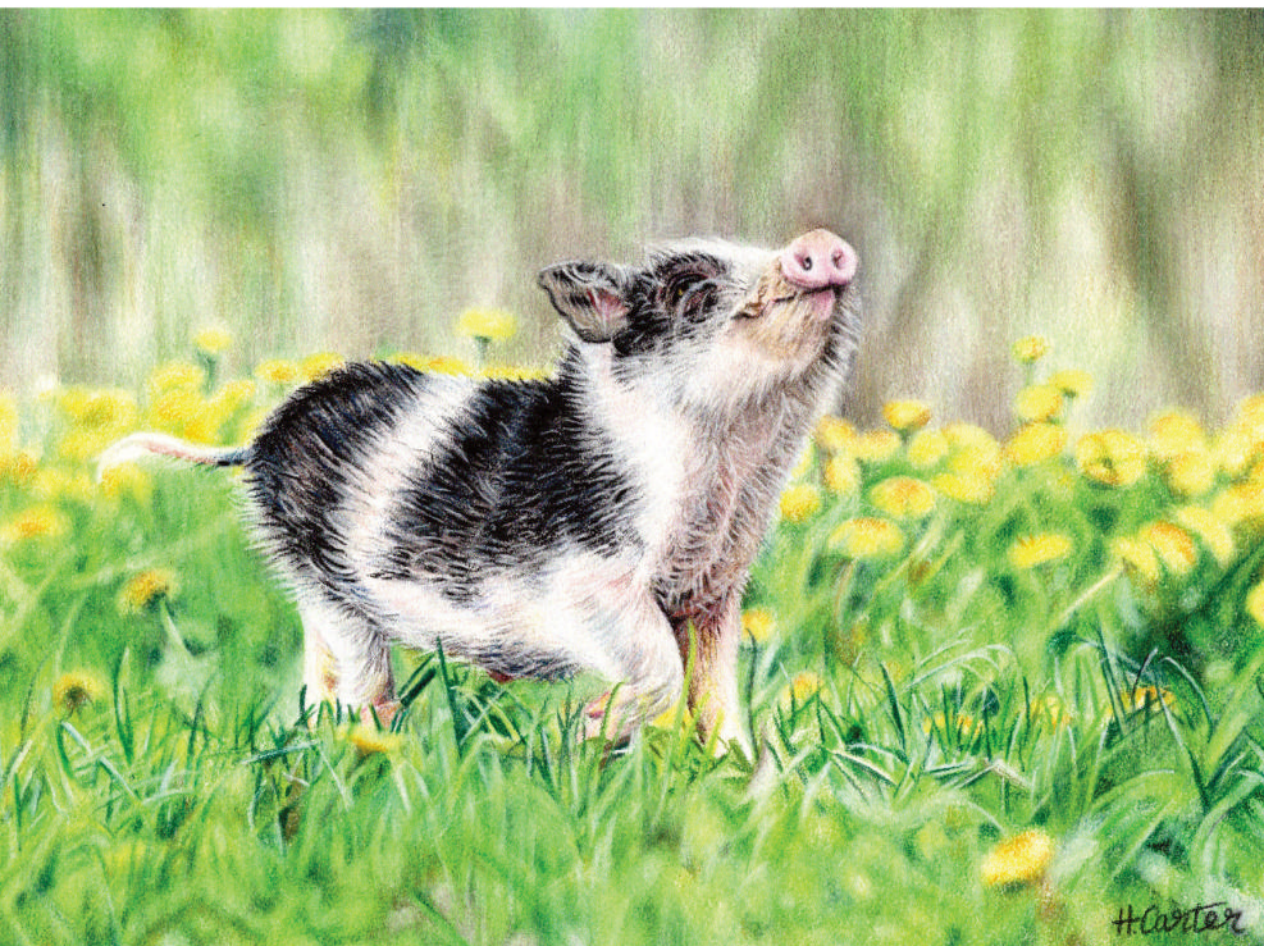
Pastelmat is a favourite surface among coloured-pencil artists and teachers for its ease of use and forgiving nature. It has benefits that can elevate your artwork, giving it a beautifully soft

feel, but many don't know how best to cover, or disguise, the grain.

The unique texture of Pastelmat is what sets it apart from other sanded papers. Composed of a fine cellulose coating on the drawing side, the fibres provide just the right amount of grip to hold multiple layers of pencil without the need for excessive pressure, and little-to-no fall off. But applying many layers takes a huge amount of time, and if you want a smooth

finish, you must be prepared for that.

You could, of course, embrace the grain, and develop techniques to incorporate its texture and finish in half the time. The results can be just as beautiful. Or, work with multiple layers and various techniques to disguise it. If you are just starting out, and you are looking for the soft, smoother result, I would recommend practising the 'smooshing' technique first.



LEFT: Archie, the Happy Pig, coloured pencil on Pastelmat, 8x10in. (20x25.5cm). Here is an example of how to use Pastelmat, where the grain of the surface helps to create a textured background



Figure 1 The four layers of colour on the Pastelmat surface shows how to 'smoosh' or blend a neutral colour

How to create smooth layers


A smoothing layer is a very light colour sandwiched in the lower layers, between layer three and five, although there's no fixed rule on that. It is often done with a pale grey, but I also like to use the lightest version of the colour I'm working on. Look at the first example (*Figure 1*, above). The lightest segment is one layer of pencil then there are three further layers. The 'smooshing' layer is third, and you can see how the application of a lighter colour flattens the appearance and smooths the area. In this example, the smoothing was done on top of three even layers, and the final segment has two additional layers on top using increased pressure.

The smooshing layer is best applied using the scumbling, or tiny ovals, technique, with light-to-medium pressure. You're not trying to flatten the tooth, it's more of a gentle squashing and blending technique that results in a smoother finish. Although of course, it's not finished, and you'll need to re-apply your colours on top, and burnish if you want it as smooth as possible. But it really cuts down on the total layers you'd need to put down if you didn't smoosh.

If you have a very light hand, you'll naturally need to add more layers anyway, but you can include multiple smooshing layers sandwiched between to give your piece a soft finish. Be careful you don't desaturate your colours though.

The pencil you use will also have an effect on the results. In the example, I used Faber-Castell Polychromos on the top half and Prismacolor Premier below. Although the feel of these two brands on the surface is very different, the visual difference is subtle until the final section. It still shows a lot of texture, as the thicker waxier pencil gets stuck on the peaks of the tooth and smooshing is not nearly as effective.

In conclusion

The key to covering the texture of Pastelmat is to keep layering. If you're still seeing lots of tooth peeking through, you haven't layered enough or used the right tools to help disguise it. But if you're expecting an ultra-smooth result, I'd highly recommend using a smoother surface. Your pencils and your wrists will thank you. 

Next month in the coloured-pencil clinic, I will be embracing summer, with practical advice on how to draw raindrops and dewdrops... so bring a brolly!



Helen Carter

Find out more about Helen and her work by visiting helencarterartist.com

Discover more

Explore Pastelmat further in Helen's step-by-step demo of a blue iris from the December 2024 issue of *Leisure Painter*, available in the digital magazine library for Studio members. Not a member yet? Start your free Studio trial today and unlock instant



access to this inspiring article and more at bit.ly/StudioFreeTrial25



5 blending methods for quick results

If thinking about all that layering is making your wrist ache, here are five common smoothing and blending techniques designed to speed up the process. Not all are helpful on Pastelmat though, as you will see.

There are three layers of pencil in each section of *Figure 2* (below), and for each I applied more pigment on top for a finished piece, but you can instantly see the differences and how some of these methods could help speed up – or slow down – the layering process.

(Again, I used Faber-Castell Polychromos on the top half and Prismacolor Premier below.) Why not try these techniques and see which one works best for you, your pencils and style of working?

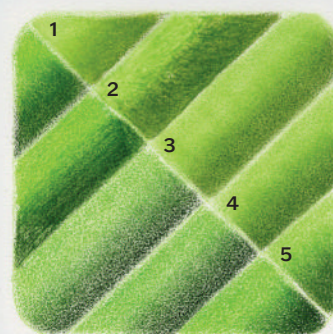


Figure 2 Five methods for quick results

Odourless mineral spirits

This must be used sparingly and in a ventilated space. Dip a small synthetic brush into the solvent, dry most of it onto a rag then gently scrub at the surface in little circles to mix the pigments. This technique has the best results for both oil and wax pencils, but there is a risk that you can damage the surface if the brush is too wet.

Blender pen

This is a more controllable method and less of a safety concern, but a brand-new juicy nib is not recommended for Pastelmat. It is too wet and dissolves the surface, as you can see. On watercolour paper, however, this does work.

Cotton bud

Dry blending works the best when the pigment is more movable, and creates a lovely smooth finish for the Polychromos pencils, with no damage to the tooth of the surface. However, it barely made a difference to the waxy Prismacolor, below.

Blending stump

Here are similar results to the cotton bud. I prefer this technique, as you can be a little more precise with a blending stump. It does pick up a lot of pigment though.


Blender pencil

Both sides appear to have retained more of their vibrancy, but I had to press quite firmly so the tooth has been flattened, preventing many more layers on top.

Coffee-break inspiration

Use your coffee and tea breaks today to draw and paint an easily overlooked kitchen view, with **Tony Underhill**

Despite the best of intentions, it's all too easy to put off creative endeavours until you think you'll have more time, which often never comes. If that sounds like you, I hope what follows inspires you to use your morning and afternoon breaks as an opportunity to draw and paint whatever is in front of you.

When I sat down in the kitchen for morning coffee a while ago, I realised that the view didn't fill me with much inspiration, but when I zoomed in on a small arrangement – the simple items on the kitchen window sill (right) – left me thinking how easy it would be to draw the objects in my 20-minute morning break then add colour when I sat down again for an afternoon cup of tea. So here's the result of the experiment. 

Next month we'll tackle an easy everyday garden scene together.



Your reference photo

You will learn

- To **build confidence and skills** in drawing
- To **work quickly** for successful results
- To use **line-and-wash techniques**

You will need

Surface

- Mixed-media or watercolour paper 5½x8½in. (14 x 21cm)

Pen

- Faber-Castell PITT Artist Pen – Black waterproof ink No. 0.5mm

Watercolour

- See colours (above right)

Brush

- Round No. 6

Miscellaneous

- Pencil
- Eraser



Reference photo

Download a reference photo with the following link bit.ly/AUG25REF or by scanning the QR code



TOP TIP

Keep everything as simple as possible in terms of subject, equipment and technique... and be careful not to dip your brush in your coffee!

Exercise 1 Morning coffee drawing

Step 1 Observation

Look carefully at the objects to develop a feel for their relative positions and proportions. Then imagine each object in its own two-dimensional box and how the boxes would overlap each other.

Step 2 Boxes

1 Sketching lightly in pencil, draw a horizontal line for the objects to sit on and position your imagined boxes until they suit your eye. It's a coffee break sketch, not an engineer's drawing so 'close enough will be good enough'!

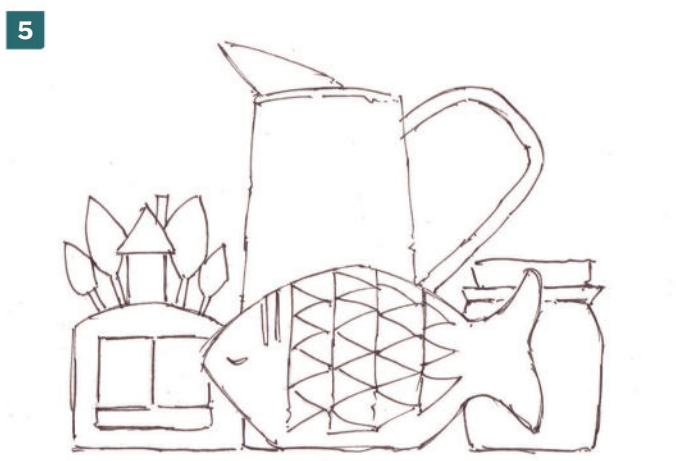
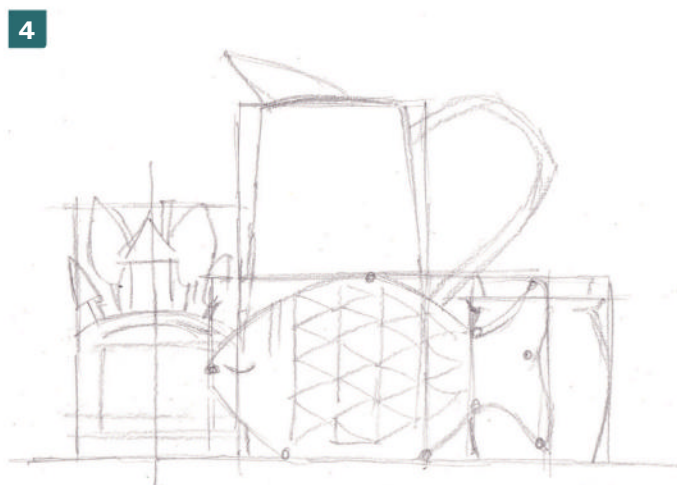
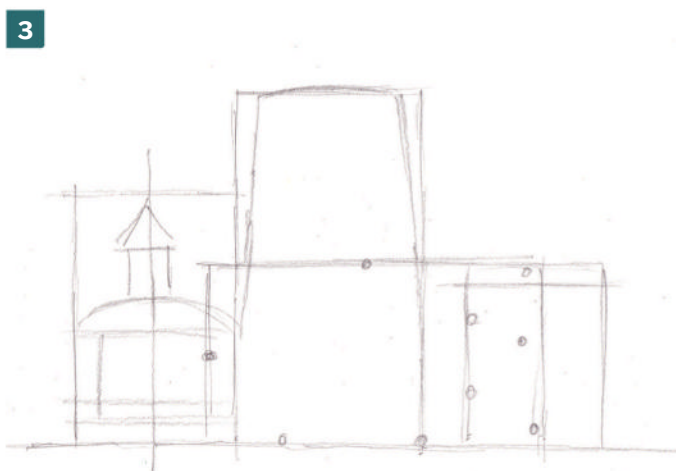
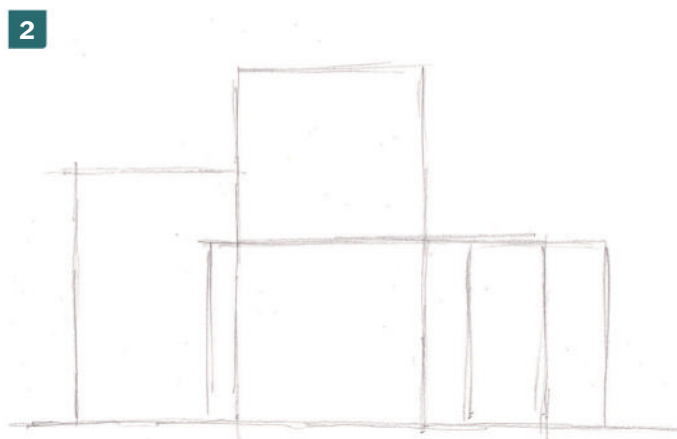
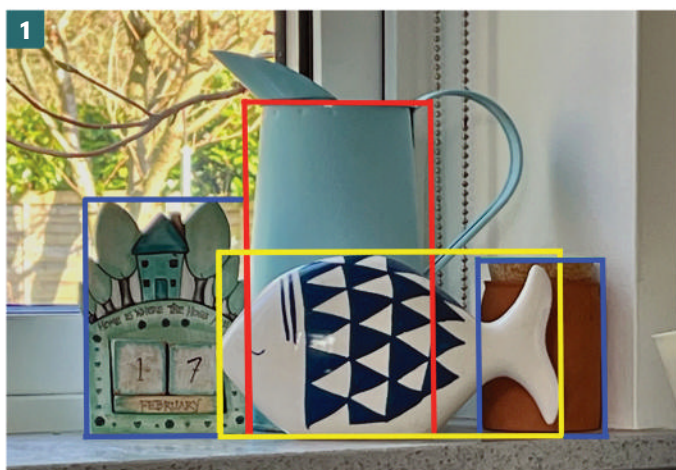
2 To make sure the tallest shape fits on the paper, begin with a box for the tin vase (minus the spout and handle) then another for the fish ornament and two more for the calendar blocks and the terracotta pot.

Step 3 Shapes (stage 1)

1 Add the sloping sides of the tin vase and a slightly curved line for the top.

2 Subdivide the calendar into its main shapes and add a guideline for the cork stopper in the terracotta pot.

3 The fish shape is a little trickier so put a pencil dot half way up the left-hand side of



The finished drawing

the box to position its nose, another at the top for the highest point of its back, two for the flat section of the base and a few more for the tail.

Step 4 Shapes (stage 2)

1 Sketch in the outline of the fish starting with the upward curve from the nose to the top of its back, then the curve down to the tail. Repeat for the lower half of the body and the tail.

2 Add the spout and handle on the vase.

Then the sides of the terracotta pot and some trees on the calendar.

3 Add the eye on the fish and four vertical lines with a row of triangles on each one, aiming to capture the general feel of the pattern rather than a perfect match.

Step 5 Develop the drawing (stage 1)

1 Switch to a pen and develop the drawing.

2 Remember it's a fun coffee break sketch so enjoy sketching freely and loosely

rather than fussing over precision and unnecessary detail.

3 Erase your pencil lines.

Step 6 Develop the drawing (stage 2)

1 Firm up any linework you think needs it.

2 Add the date on the calendar, simple vertical hatching on the vase and pot to help suggest their circular form, and a few dots to hint at texture on the cork stopper.

Exercise 2 Afternoon tea painting

Step 1 Colour tests

1 Beginning by taking a minute or two to explore which colours to use will save time later. I was more interested in colour harmony and simplicity than precise matches and quickly worked out I could achieve the clean, lively look I was after using my four colours and mixing them to create the colours I needed.



Step 2 First washes

1 Touching the paper as few times as possible, paint the vase with a watery wash of phthalo blue (green shade). While the wash is still wet, rinse and dry the brush and use a single downward stroke to lift out colour on the left-hand side to suggest it's catching the light. Rinse and dry again if you need to use a second stroke.

2 Paint the cork stopper and the calendar number blocks with a watery wash of new gamboge then add pyrrol scarlet to the wash and paint the terracotta pot.

3 Make a watery mix of new gamboge and phthalo blue (green shade) and paint the rest of the calendar.

Step 3 Second washes

1 Add another slightly stronger wash of phthalo blue (green shade) to the right-hand half of the vase. While the wash is still wet, rinse the brush, blot it on tissue to remove excess water and use a few gentle downward strokes of the damp brush to

blend the wash into the left-hand side.

2 Add another wash of new gamboge and pyrrol scarlet to the right and left-hand sides of the terracotta pot and blend across the middle section.

3 Strengthen the new gamboge and phthalo blue (green shade) mix and paint the calendar house.

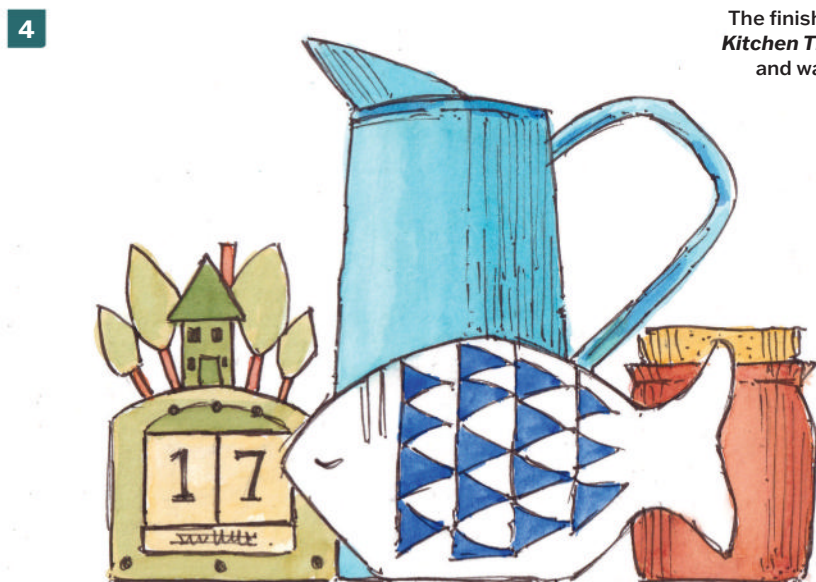
Step 4 Third washes and finishing touches

1 Add another wash of phthalo blue (green shade) to the right-hand side of the vase and blend as previously.

2 Paint and blend another wash of new gamboge and pyrrol scarlet on the pot and use the same colour for the calendar chimney and tree trunks.

3 Mix a strong wash of French ultramarine and paint the pattern on the fish and accents on the rim and handle of the vase.

4 Assess your sketch for any final touches; in my case another wash on the calendar house and restating some of my linework.



The finished sketch
Kitchen Things, pen
and watercolour,
5½x8½in.
(14x21cm)



Tony Underhill

For more information about Tony and his work, contact him at tonyunderhill@me.com



PAINTERS
ONLINE

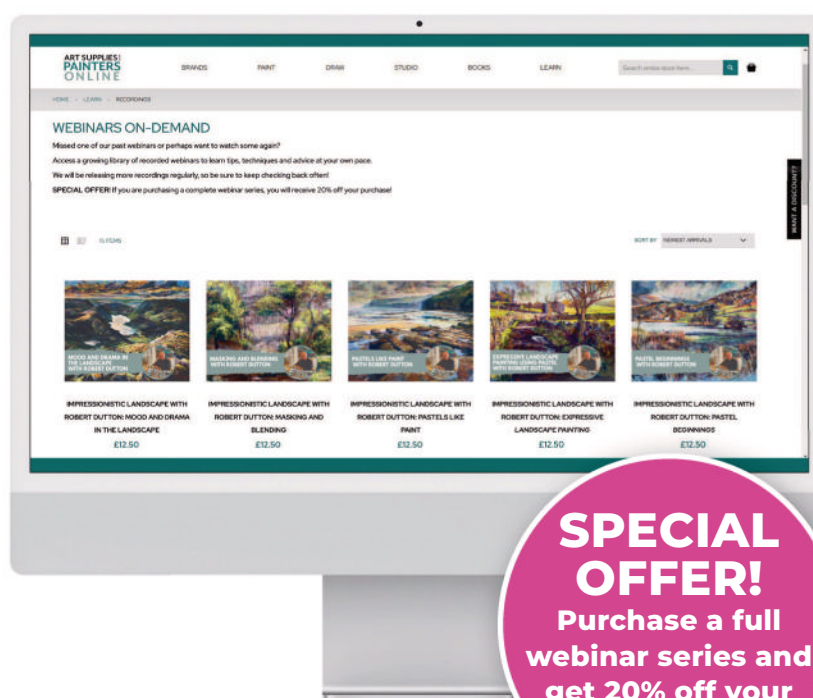
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SCAN ME



Easy days

Pastels make light work of easy sketchbook studies, says **Nina Squire**. Here's how she ensures she's always prepared

You will learn

- To use methods for painting with **soft pastels in sketchbooks**
- To **relax and stop thinking** that sketching must be fast
- To **pack light!**

I often see raised eyebrows when I mention that I love using soft pastels in my sketchbook. Watercolours are a popular choice, being portable and easy to use, but pastels and pastel pencils feel more familiar to me. I used to take watercolours out, but I always missed my pastels. One day, I simply used

BELOW: The small sketch (bottom right) became the inspiration for more detailed artwork back in the studio

RIGHT: Making good use of a day at the beach

them instead, and I haven't missed the watercolours since! In this article, I'll share my favourite tips and techniques to help you enjoy using pastels in your sketchbook.

Why soft pastels?

One of the great things about soft pastels is that they're ready to use straight from the box; there's no need for palettes or lots of water (although I do enjoy using both at times). Once you've have a few tricks up your sleeve, you'll see just how versatile they can be in a sketchbook.





Invest in the best

Buying good-quality materials makes all the difference. My favourites are the Seawhite of Brighton travel sketchbooks, which contain 200gsm watercolour paper, a hardcover, and an elastic band to keep the pages secure when travelling.

When choosing a sketchbook, I like stitched pages rather than ring-bound. This allows me to draw across the pages, giving me a larger format to work on. I keep a few different sizes on hand: square sketchbooks are great for travelling light, while an A5 travel

ABOVE:
A sketchbook study from a Dorset coastal walk

BELOW:
Splashing and dripping help to capture atmosphere

journal fits perfectly in a rucksack. If you're feeling ambitious, an A4 sketchbook is ideal for expressive flicks and splashes.

A common concern with pastels in sketchbooks is smudging. The key is to apply less pigment and build up the colours. Using soft pastel pencils rather than full sticks helps reduce excess dust and keeps the pages cleaner. Storing your sketchbook with the elastic band secured prevents the pages from rubbing against each other. If I do work with soft pastel sticks, I apply fixative to secure the pastel.

Adding liquid

I also use liquid to 'paint' with the pastel pigment. High-quality soft pastels, such as Unison Colour or Faber-Castell Pitt Pastels, are made mostly of pure pigment with minimal binder. Adding liquid temporarily returns the pastel to its raw, pre-formed state as a paste.

It can take a little while to get the balance right, but with practice you can create a beautiful, paint-like syrup. Add too much water, and you'll wash it away; too little, and it brushes off. It's a technique worth perfecting. I prefer alcohol over water, as it evaporates quickly. A good tip is to have a spray bottle rather than a pot of water, as it helps limit the amount of water you apply. If your pastels don't behave in the way that I describe, it will be the binder that's used. Some are waxy or greasy, which can be disheartening. Just experiment with what works best with what you have.

4 TOP TIPS

1 Rushing to finish

One of the biggest misconceptions about sketching is that it's about speed. Instead, take your time, observe carefully, and capture details with a slow, considered hand.

2 Panicking about smudging

Keep a piece of glassine paper between pages if you're worried about smudging, or try using pastel pencils for finer details.

3 Disasters happen

If a page becomes difficult, don't give up; use it as a chance to experiment. Try different mark-making techniques or layer a new colour over the top.

4 Fall in love with taking notes

I love adding notes alongside my sketches, as they help capture the atmosphere and provide useful references for later.



If you find you've washed away too much colour, don't worry – you can reapply it. Building up layers by overlaying marks with light pressure helps to create depth. If you make too much dust, simply reduce the pressure.



What to pack

Keep your kit simple; less to carry means more freedom to explore! My essentials include:

- An old tea towel
- Pre-selected colours for your landscape or scenes
- A plastic bag for sitting on
- A small spray bottle of water
- A putty rubber
- A craft knife
- A flask of tea.

Sketching at home

If taking your sketchbook out feels daunting, start at home. A simple scene, like a teapot or a favourite cake, is a great way to build confidence. A collection of personal objects, such as shells from the beach, makes for a meaningful still-life study.

Once you're ready to venture out, remember that your car can be a mobile studio. A quick stop on a journey offers an inspiring view, and café sketches add a wonderful

storytelling element to your sketchbook. If you pick up a coffee on the way, why not try using it for a tonal wash?

The joy of looking back

As well as making notes with your sketches, dating them is also helpful, especially if you reference photos from the same trip. There's nothing more inspiring than flipping through an old sketchbook years later and reliving those creative moments. You'll see how much your skills have improved and may even find ideas you'd forgotten about. A simple sketch can be the start of a larger artwork; it's a way of storing inspiration.

Your sketchbook, your escape

So, why not give it a go? Grab a sketchbook, a few pastel pencils, and see where your creativity takes you. Whether at home, in a café, or on a walk, sketching can be a wonderful

ABOVE:
The materials used for working sketches and more finished artwork

EXERCISE: a simple sketching technique

If you're new to pastels in sketchbooks, try this easy exercise to build confidence:

1

Pick a simple object, like shells and pebbles, a teacup and saucer, or a few old buttons in a pile.

2

Sketch its outline lightly with a pastel pencil or graphite pencil.

3

Take a soft pastel and add colour.


4

Blend a small section with a wet brush and observe how the pigment moves.

5

Experiment with layering marks to add depth. Pastels will work on wet or dry surfaces. The effects are different so try both.

This is where the magic happens. You'll start to see how versatile pastels can be in a sketchbook. Every page is an opportunity to learn. Sometimes the pages you rework are the best as you relax and enjoy experimenting.

way to enjoy a creative moment. There's no right or wrong way to do your art in a sketchbook; it's just carving a little time out of a busy day to enjoy creating. I'd love to see what you create. Happy sketching! 

Nina, what inspires you to paint?

For me, it's the idea that you can capture a view you'd like to be in. An artwork is like a window so you create a tiny mini-break on your wall. I love the thought of bringing a view back to my studio and enjoying it for longer through the act of creating. The coast is especially inspirational: the light constantly shifting, the wind tugging at pages – it invites you to loosen up and respond rather than overthink. I find sketchbooks are where the magic begins. They're not about perfect drawings; they're about curiosity, freedom, and capturing the essence of a place. I often sketch standing in the dunes or perched on a rock, quickly noting colour, light, or movement before it slips away – both in marks and in words.

The coast encourages experimentation. With soft pastel and a bit of sea breeze, you're almost forced to be more expressive – marks become more gestural, colours bolder, and ideas more playful. That's what I love passing on to my students: the joy of it and allowing your sketchbook to be a space for adventure. It's not about getting it right; it's about showing up, observing, and creating a visual diary that reflects your own connection to the landscape.



Nina Squire

Find out more about Nina, her workshops and her artwork by visiting thepastelartist.co.uk

Tradition & innovation

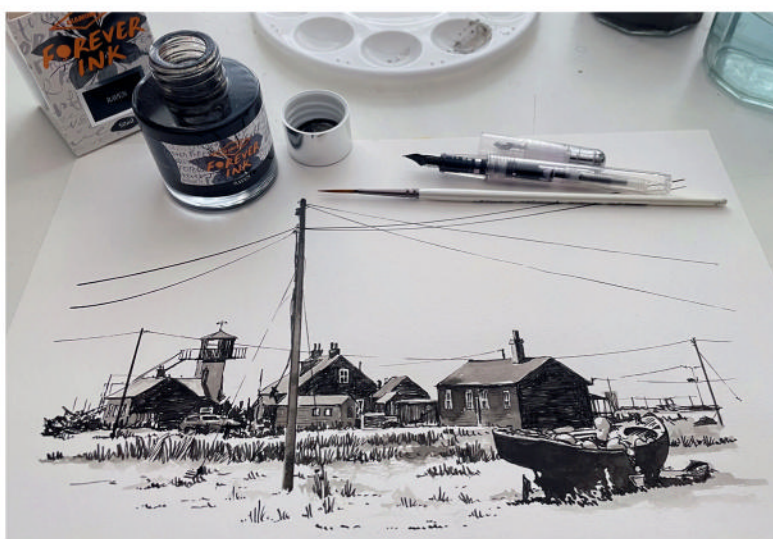
Fountain-pen ink artist, **Nick Stewart** is enthusiastic to work with Diamine's imaginative new nano-particle ink, Forever Ink

In 2015 I began a project to investigate and re-imagine fountain-pen ink for use as a serious art medium in painting, illustration and calligraphy, and to demonstrate that this fabulous medium can be used for so much more than just handwriting. I have been a fan of Diamine inks from the beginning, but the introduction of Forever Ink – its first nano-particle ink range – has been a game changer.

The vast majority of fountain-pen inks I have worked with have been dye based, which are typical inks for writing with a fountain pen. The results have been impressive, particularly when using inks with chromatic qualities. Chromatic inks, when introduced to wetted absorbent papers, release some of the dyes that make up their hue, in effect becoming a multi-coloured ink. (See example shown in this feature and further examples of fountain-pen ink art in my article in *Leisure Painter's* July 2025 issue).

RIGHT:
Dungeness,
drawing made
using Forever Ink
in colour, raven

BELOW: The
finished artwork
Dungeness,
Diamine ink,
8½×11¾in.
(21.5×30cm).
This artwork
was coloured
with chromatic
ink laid over the
drawing.



Pigment fountain-pen inks, on the other hand, are made up of pigment particles. These are in effect particles of colour suspended in solution and are permanent, water resistant and lightfast, but do not have chromatic

qualities. Two key issues that I have had with using pigment inks is that when they dry, some of the pigment particles rest on the surface as a dust, and can smudge and smear when over washed with colour. They also can't be left for long in a fountain pen without the pigment particles clogging the feed and drying solid and thereby ruining the pen. This has all changed with the launch of Forever Ink.

Enter Forever Ink

Forever Ink is made with nano-particle pigments – and this is the real innovation. Because these pigment particles are invisible to the naked eye, they are small enough not to dry in a pen feed and therefore completely dry on paper surfaces without leaving a residue that can later smear when over washed.

This is a huge move forward, because until now I have only used dye-based fountain-pen inks in my art, applying the background washes first, mid-tones second, followed by the final line work and highlights. (The techniques and processes are similar to those a watercolour painter might use.) With





Forever Ink colour range (illustrated by Nick Stewart)

the new Forever Inks, however, not only can I continue to work like a watercolour painter if I choose, but also like an illustrator. As the inks are waterproof, I now create the line work first then work on top using dye-based inks and utilising their chromatic behaviours, or using other media entirely.

Forever Ink in practice

I drew Dungeness (page 47) using a fountain pen with a flex nib and a half rigger brush – and the colour raven in Forever Ink. Taking a sheet of cartridge paper, I filled the pen with raven and drew the heavy tones with the pen.

Diamine launches Forever Ink

Diamine is a Liverpool-based company that has been making inks since 1864. Using traditional ink production methods, it manufactures the finest quality fountain pen, calligraphy, drawing and registrar inks. Internationally recognised for its innovative dye-base standard, sheening, shimmer and chameleon fountain-pen inks, Diamine has recently released its first range of 16 permanent, lightfast and waterproof nano-particle pigment inks – Forever Ink. (The smaller particle size in this ink allows for a more even distribution of the pigment, which leads to brighter, more saturated colours.) Beautifully packaged, these are now available in 50ml recyclable glass bottles.

For the half-tones I twisted a drop or two of ink from the pen into a dimple tray, added water then applied the various half-tones. The fountain pen also allowed for a continuous flow of

BELOW: Nick's favourite three primaries, from which he mixes nearly all his colours

ink – no dipping necessary! Using the fountain pen also gave me the option to change the colour. These two simple and inexpensive tools gave me both line variation and texture, which added more visual sophistication to the image.

In the second image, I added an orange dye-based (chromatic) ink to the sky. The subtle release of oranges, yellows and pinks made for a dramatic addition to the image. I was delighted to see that both ink types worked easily and harmoniously together; you really should try it.

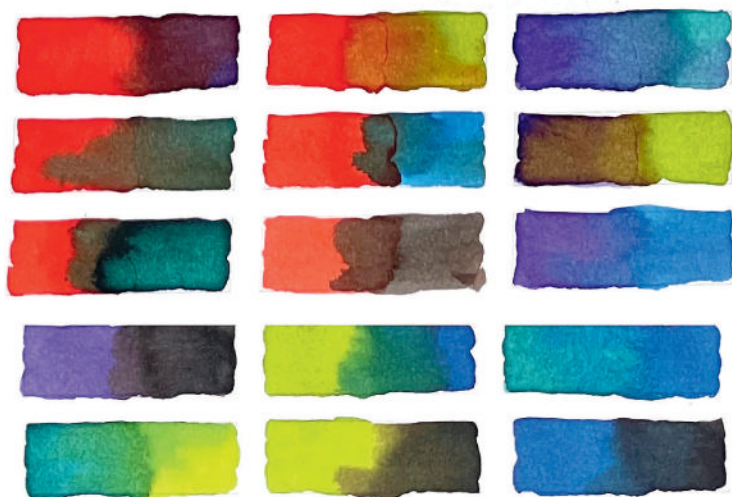
Qualities and colours

A 50ml bottle (£13.95) will go a long way and by simply using the primary colours plus black – skyline, hot magenta, solar yellow and raven – you will be able to achieve most of the colours you need through mixing, and these colours really do mix easily. Should you need more, there are 12 other beautiful colours in the range.

The ink works well in good-quality art journals, notebooks and sketchbooks, as well as on all weights and textures of watercolour and cartridge papers. You can also use it to excellent effect on smooth, lightweight Japanese papers.

Forever Ink is an exciting development, as using pigment and dye-based inks together not only expands the possibilities for fountain-pen ink art, but presents us with a new





I have been a fan of Diamine inks from the beginning, but the introduction of Forever Ink – its first nano-particle ink range – has been a game changer.

genre that is unique and versatile with unlimited creative possibilities. So, for pen-and-ink artists, urban sketchers, fountain-pen sketchers, and anyone who uses ink in their creative practice, this must be of interest.

After ten years of intensive exploration into fountain-pen ink, this new range is the final piece of the puzzle – and I haven't even mentioned the potential Forever Inks offer for calligraphy and lettering enthusiasts!

Why are Forever Inks so special?

If you are looking for a permanent illustration or calligraphy ink, there are many good reasons for using Forever Ink including: its vibrancy of colour, mixability, ease of use, fountain-pen friendliness, quick drying time, lightfastness and water resistance, but equally important is the ink's sustainability. Ink sketchers often use a copious number of permanent fine liners that are difficult to recycle and, once finished with, end up going straight to landfill. With Forever Ink, you only need one fountain pen, dip pen or brush. You have a large range of colour choices and the bottles the inks come in are also recyclable!



So, if you haven't already, dig out that old fountain pen, fill it up with Forever Ink, and have some fun.

Find out more about Forever Inks at diamineinks.co.uk 

ABOVE LEFT:
A sample sheet of colour mixes. These vibrant inks blend easily

DIAMINE.

Our much anticipated
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Drama in the sky

In the first article of a three-part series, **Colin Joyce** offers tips and techniques for painting atmospheric skies in watercolour

You will learn

- Techniques to **add drama** to your watercolour landscapes
- The **colours and mixes** used to create skies, clouds and their shadows
- To **build confidence** with bold application of paint

Sometimes the sky in your painting can be quite plain and isn't meant to be a major part of the subject matter. On other occasions, however, it may be the subject itself or create drama and contrast in the scene, raising it to another level. Sunrises and sunsets come immediately to mind of course, with high contrast between the sky and the land, but even during the daytime an atmospheric sky can add greatly to the composition.

Here in part one of this short series, I'm going to concentrate on the use of watercolour as the medium. I will show how to create your skies and what type of composition works best.

A trap you can easily fall into is



spending too long painting the sky in watercolour. In many cases, it should take no more than two or three minutes after which there is a risk of

creating runbacks as the paper dries, but you attempt to keep painting and disaster ensues. We've all done it!

In this first example, *Roadside*

ABOVE:
Roadside Sketch, watercolour on Saunders Waterford 300gsm rough paper, 5x7in. (13x18cm). Sky colours used: ultramarine blue, cerulean blue and alizarin crimson.



LEFT: Showers at Whitburn, watercolour on Saunders Waterford 300gsm rough paper, 7x10in. (18x28cm). To create the effect of rain, load a brush with your shadow colour and drag diagonally down from the bottom of the clouds before they dry.

“A trap you can easily fall into is spending too long painting a sky in watercolour. In many cases, it should take no more than two or three minutes after which there is a risk of creating runbacks as the paper dries.”

Sketch (left), I spotted a scene whilst driving and luckily there was room to pull off the road and park nearby. Using a small piece of watercolour paper and a set of half pans (which are always in the car) I spent 15 minutes capturing the light. The sky was painted onto dry paper using ultramarine blue at the top and cerulean blue towards the horizon, leaving space for the white clouds. A touch of alizarin crimson was added to ultramarine for the cloud shadows. With a damp brush I then softened parts of the clouds to blend with the blue. The land was placed low to give emphasis to the sky and was painted

quickly. I hope I captured the sense of the clouds dancing across the sky.

Another little scene created *en plein air* was *Showers at Whitburn* (below left), although I spent longer completing this sketch. The technique was broadly the same, but a little more time was spent creating the clouds and their shadows. Rain was falling from the clouds and to show this I dragged the brush, loaded with the shadow colour, diagonally down from the bottom of the clouds before they had dried completely. Fortunately, the rain stayed out at sea that day.

Creating big skies

So, what should you be looking to achieve to create atmosphere and drama in your skies? If the sky is your main subject in a painting, look to compose a scene with a low horizon to place emphasis on the sky.

Then use bold brushstrokes, balance warm and cool colours, and consider plenty of contrast for a moody appearance. Try creating holes in your clouds to let through shafts of light.

I was inspired to paint *Big Skies, Loch Ewe* (below), when I saw this huge cloud dwarfing the large mountains below. The sky was threatening and only a little blue appeared so the emphasis was on creating grey shadows in the clouds. Mixing blue and brown to make a dark grey helped to create a *vignette* in the top corners, and the same colours then suggested the mountains below. The sky takes up about two thirds of this scene.

Skies don't all have to be blue with white clouds of course; adding other colours will enliven your paintings. If you look at a sky long enough, you will see many different colours start to appear. *Norfolk Broads, Evening* (over the page) demonstrates the

ABOVE: *Big Skies, Loch Ewe*, watercolour on Clairefontaine 300gsm rough paper, 5×7in. (13×18cm). Below the loch, notice how just a small amount of foreground gives the painting depth.

TIP

I prefer using round brushes, but you can use flat if that's your favourite type. What's more important is that you ensure the brush you choose is large enough to cover the paper quickly.

I find a large mop works best for me.



TIP

Choose a palette with deep wells to allow mixing plenty of colour for the sky washes. You don't want to run out halfway through painting your sky. Any left-over paint will no doubt come in handy later.

warmth of an evening sky, and I mixed blue and crimson to highlight this. The reddish hues complement the yellow-greens of the foreground. Most of this painting was created using wet-into-wet washes, the only details being the mill and the sailing boat that is so typical of the Norfolk Broads.

Winter light

Winter skies are appealing to paint, too. I often return to Sunderland to visit family and friends. During the winter months, dogs are allowed on the beach and it's common to see lots of people out walking. Painting watercolour outdoors in winter is achievable if the sun is out. I painted *Roker Beach, Winter Light* (below) using mainly warm yellows and cool blue-greys. The entire sky was covered with a gentle wash of yellow ochre and



the grey was added before the yellow dried, to allow its warmth to show through. The whiter parts of the sky were created using a piece of tissue to remove the wet paint to suggest clouds.

A stronger wash of yellow ochre was placed for the beach, with a touch of burnt sienna in the immediate foreground. The sea has two layers of grey and the distant land and pier were described simply in dark grey. The people on the beach were added when everything else was dry (after a welcome coffee in a seafront café).

Be bold

To create real drama in your sky it is necessary to place bold colour on your painting. If using a photo as reference, you will most likely have to enhance the tones beyond reality. My painting, *Sun Breaking Through, Upper Loch Torridon* (right) does just that. It had been a wet and miserable day, but finally the clouds parted and the sun broke through; we couldn't even see the mountains minutes before. Like the beach scene, the yellows were added first and a strong blue-grey was fed in from the top and allowed to blend with

ABOVE: Norfolk Broads, Evening, watercolour on Saunders Waterford 300gsm rough paper, 10x14in. (26x28cm). The reddish hue of the sky (made from mixing blue with crimson) complements the green of the foreground.

BELOW LEFT: Roker Beach, Winter Light, watercolour on Saunders Waterford 300gsm rough paper, 10x14in. (26x28cm). Sky colours used: yellow ochre and blue-grey. The cloud shapes were lifted using tissue while the sky was still wet.



RIGHT: Sun Breaking Through, Upper Loch Torridon, watercolour on Saunders Waterford 300gsm rough paper, 7x10in. (18x28cm). The yellows were placed first and the blue-grey was fed in from the top and allowed to blend wet in wet.

BELOW: Wet-into-Wet Sky, watercolour on Saunders Waterford 300gsm rough paper, 10x14in. (26x28cm).



“Rain was falling from the clouds and to show this, I dragged the brush, loaded with the shadow colour, diagonally down from the bottom of the clouds before they had dried completely.”

the yellow in places. The clouds were still grey, but I wanted to warm them up a little. The mountains were added from back to front, gradually using stronger tones to suggest recession. In this scene the sky takes up most of the painting. 

In part two next month, I'll show how to paint acrylic skies, and provide you with a step-by-step demonstration. In the meantime, why not try recreating one of these watercolour paintings, or try the exercise below?



Colin Joyce

Based in Fife, Scotland, Colin regularly provides demonstrations and workshops for art groups throughout the UK. He will be leading a painting holiday in Ballycastle, Northern Ireland in September 2025. Visit his website

colinjoyceart.com or email colin@colinjoyceart.com for more information.



Try this!

In *Wet-into-Wet Sky* (left) I created a sky under which a scene was then placed. This is a wonderful way to practise painting skies. Soak the paper and allow it to absorb the water then keep your paper on an angle to allow colour to run down as you apply it. Pick up paint directly from your palette and cover the sky area with diagonal strokes. Add other colours to your brush to create variety. I began with ultramarine blue then added a touch of burnt sienna to dull it down on the right-hand side. (You must apply lots of paint as it will dry much lighter.) Now, the important part is to leave it alone! Don't be tempted to fiddle; just let the watercolour do what it wants. I regularly make half a dozen of these skies then add a scene to it later. Often the result dictates what you do next. Just have fun and experiment.

Acrylics



The finished painting
Alpaca, acrylic on
paper, 11¾x8½in.
(30x21.5cm)

Impasto alpaca

Take out your acrylic colours and have fun learning eight techniques to paint a cute alpaca, by **Ali Hargreaves**

You will learn

- How to **mix and tint** a variety of colours
- How to **hone your observational skills**
- A wide range of acrylic techniques, including **sgraffito** and **impasto**

The following demonstration puts an emphasis on practising several acrylic techniques. Enjoy working through these exercises in your sketchbook before you begin the demonstration painting in earnest. **LP**

Colour mixing to create black

Black is made up of three primary colours with a bias on blue in the mix. Mix straight onto the paper and avoid adding water. Use water to clean the brush then dry it well before adding the next colour.

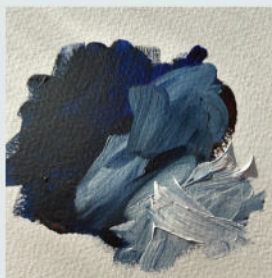
- 1 Mix burnt sienna and ultramarine
- 2 Mix phthalo turquoise and crimson
- 3 Mix Prussian blue and cadmium red.



Mixing black with ultramarine blue and burnt sienna

Tinting

Tinting is the technique used to make a colour lighter by adding white. I use titanium white, which is opaque and so is a good basic white. (Zinc white is transparent so works well for tinting transparent colours.) Begin with your chosen mix of black and add white to it. The more white you add, the lighter the colour becomes. Repeat this with different mixes. Try varying the colour mix ratio to make a larger range of warmer and cooler greys.



Prussian blue + cadmium red (tinted with white)



Phthalo blue + crimson (tinted with white)



Burnt sienna + ultramarine blue (tinted with white)

Tonal value strips

This is a useful piece of kit for finding tonal values; here you are creating a line from dark (black) to light (white). The following demonstration puts emphasis on tonal values so begin by painting a small 2cm square of your chosen black mix (see *Technique 1*, left), add a small amount of white to the mix and paint the next square. Repeat this until you have a white square at the end.

TIP Keep this in your sketchbook as a bookmark for future use.



Sgraffito

This term comes from the Italian *sgraffiare*, which means to scratch. First, paint a light colour then add a dark colour over the top. Scratch into it to reveal the colour beneath (far left). Then paint an underlayer of dark paint (use one of your black mixes) and wait for it to dry. Paint over with a highly tinted (light) colour then scratch into it with a sharp tool to reveal the colour underneath (left).

I strongly recommend you keep a sketchbook and add all your experiments into it with notes. Keep the mistakes in too, and make notes as to why it went wrong. This will become your best reference ever, because you produced it.

Impasto

Impasto is the Italian word for paste. This technique involves applying thick paint and is most easily applied using a

painting knife and heavy-body paint. It's fantastic for adding textures.

Like all techniques, this takes practice.

Make sure you add plenty of paint to the knife's edge. It is important to be generous with the amount of paint you use.



A Be gentle with the application. Don't press down too hard. Let the flat of the knife glide, therefore leaving thick paint on the surface.



B Curve and bend the edge of the knife around to create curved lines.



C Scratch into the paint at times to add extra textures and lines.

Printing with wallpaper

Using print is a great way to add pattern and texture to your work. Use a flat brush to apply a thin layer of paint over the surface of the wallpaper then turn it over and press it

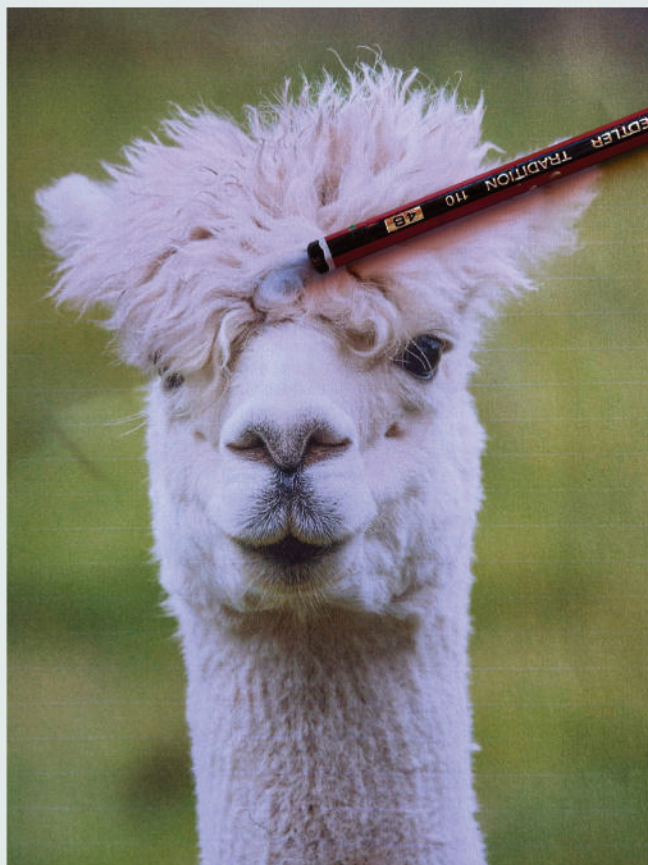
down onto your painting. Keep it in place and gently rub the surface to transfer the pattern. Lift it off gently.

TIP It is important to test these out before applying to your painting, as all wallpapers work differently – sometimes with surprising results.



Drawing with ink and erasing mistakes

Using ink helps you to feel more confident, freer with your drawing, and avoids messy pencil lines. I encourage you to draw your subject using acrylic ink (or watered-down paint to ink consistency). Use a fine brush to draw white over a dry, dark background. If you make a mistake, just wipe it off with a damp kitchen towel. Twist the paper towel to wipe off details (right).



Observation and drawing skills

If you are a good observer, you will be a good artist. Include all your preliminary sketches in your sketchbook.

A Look carefully at the photo of the alpaca (above) and notice the angles, shapes, proportions, relationships and tonal values.

B Angles Try drawing using the Cubist style of straight lines. This will help you focus on the angles and simplify the subject. Use a pencil to transfer the angle to the paper (see above).

C Shape Notice the shapes you see, such as the tulip shape of the nose, the Aladdin's lamp for the mouth, and the differences in the ear shapes.



D Proportions Notice how the width of the head is the same as the height, and the top of the nose to the bottom of the chin. The left-hand side of the face is narrower than the right-hand side.

E Relationships Look at where the eyes are positioned (you can see the majority of the eye and ear on the right-hand side but hardly any of the left). Observe the overlapping lines of the nostrils.

F Tonal values Can you spot where the main dark tones are and scribble these into the drawing? This will help you to focus on these areas when painting. Observe the patterns in the fur, which vary a lot.

Impasto using acrylic

You will need

Surface

- Bockingford 300gsm NOT paper
- 11¼x8½in. (30x21.5cm)

Daler-Rowney System 3 brushes

- Short flats ½in. and ¼in.
- Round No. 0

Daler-Rowney System 3 soft-body acrylics

- Burnt sienna
- Raw sienna
- Ultramarine blue
- Titanium white (heavy body)

Daler-Rowney FW acrylic ink

- White

Miscellaneous

- Sharp tool, such as a ruling pen or a barbecue stick
- Painting knife, preferably trowel shaped
- Kitchen roll
- Milk bottle top (for decanting the ink)
- Textured wallpaper (look at the patterns on the alpaca's neck and choose a relevant pattern)
- Low-tack tape; I used DIY Frog tape



Reference photo

Download a reference photo with the following link bit.ly/AUG25REF or by scanning the QR code

Your reference photo for this project (Photo from Pixabay: wagrati_photo)



Step 1

Mark an A4 window on the paper and tape around it. Cover the area with black (I used phthalo turquoise and crimson). Mix the colours straight onto the paper.



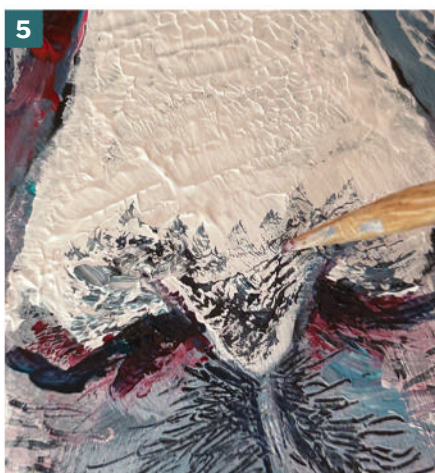
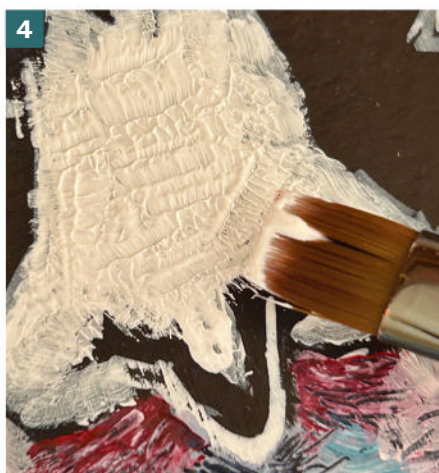
Step 2

Draw the alpaca using white ink (or watered-down white paint). Let it dry completely.



Step 3

Start by painting the area around the nose. Paint over the dark background with a light mix of colour. Don't cover the whole area





as it will dry too quickly; do a small section at a time. Use a sharp tool to scratch little hairs (*sgraffito*). Notice the direction they grow and work outwards. Repeat with the chin and mouth. If you lose too much of the dark colour, wait for it to dry and paint over it with the dark paint and start again.

Step 4

Add the bridge of the nose by painting the main area in white (this is the lightest area) then gently patting the paint up and down with a small flat brush to create great texture. Use your tonal strip to help work out the tones.

Step 5

Once dry, cover the white area above the nostrils with dark paint and use *sgraffito* again, allowing the light marks to scratch through.

Step 6

For extra texture, print little dots with the end of the sharp tool.

Step 7

Paint the sides of the face and neck using

the edge of the flat brush to achieve a more disheveled look.

Step 8

Paint over the right eye with the dark mix using the fine round brush to establish the curvy shape then add the highlights in the top right-hand corner. Add the darker and lighter lines around the eye.

Step 9

Repeat for the left eye, observing that you don't actually see much of it!

Step 10

Paint the ears using the edge of the flat brush in the direction the fur is growing and add grey shadows (using your tinted colour). Use the tonal strip to help you. The ends of the ears are light so don't be afraid to use straight white as this will contrast strongly with the dark background and make an impact.

Step 11

Now use your painting knife with plenty of paint to create the *impasto*. Add curls and the movement in the fur with confident

marks. Remember to be generous with your paint. If you're finding it tricky, wait for the first layer to dry before adding another.

Step 12

1 Add fine lines for the eye lashes, using the white acrylic ink and your sharp tool.

2 Titivate by adding stronger tonal contrasts, extra individual bits of fur and generally finishing the painting. Take the tape off to give it a lovely clean frame.



Ali Hargreaves

Based in Poynton in Cheshire, Ali is an artist and qualified teacher. She now leads regular classes, workshops and painting holidays, and demonstrates for art clubs. Visit www.alisart.co.uk


Sunlight shadows

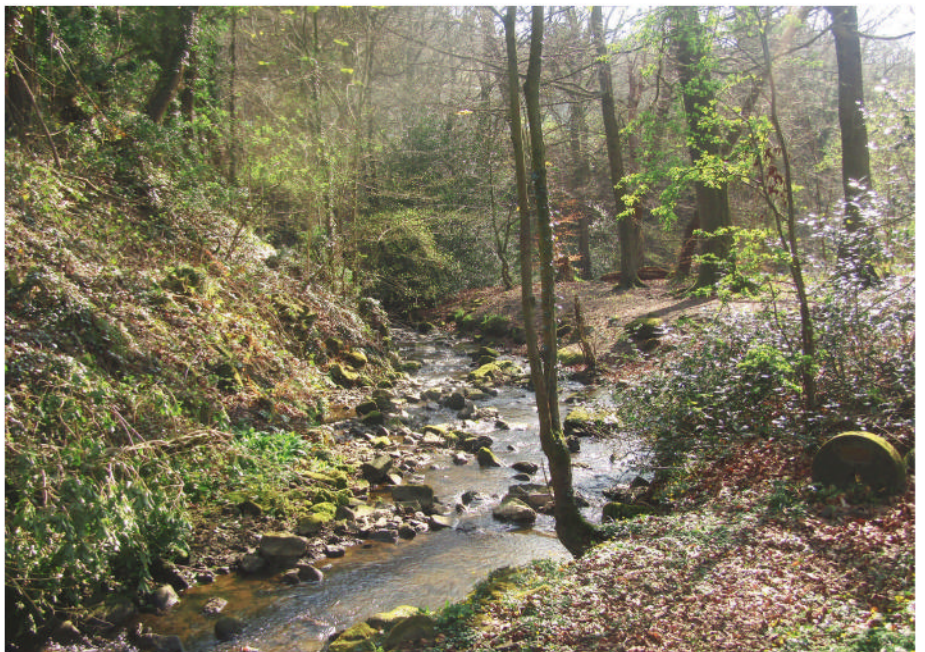
Here's how **Richard Holland** paints an early summer landscape *en plein air*

To paint summer landscapes, you'll need to consider the unique aspects of light and weather, and the vibrant colours of nature. Gather your art materials, plan your composition and welcome the fleeting nature of the changing scene.

My set-up for painting is a little Heath Robinson, as I use a sturdy camera tripod, a handmade surface to put my canvas on that has a fitting to connect to the tripod, and a handmade board with cut-outs that fit around the tripod legs and hold my paints and brushes.

Preparation

I begin by preparing a MDF board canvas with three layers of gesso to seal the MDF then a layer of heavy carveable modelling paste to give the canvas texture. I have painted on this surface for a few years and find it amenable to *plein-air* painting. 



Your reference photo

How to paint a landscape

You will learn

- To **free up** your usual methods of painting
- To **simplify and change** elements
- To **experiment** with **different materials**

You will need

Surface

- A prepared board 16x16in. (40.5x40.5cm) with gesso and Galeria Heavy Carvable Modelling Paste

Oils*

- French ultramarine deep
- Cobalt blue hue
- Indigo
- Permanent yellow (deep and light)
- Naples yellow
- Alizarin crimson
- Venetian rose flesh
- Burnt sienna
- Burnt umber

- Yellow ochre
- Light green
- Cadmium red
- Titanium white
- Buff titanium
- Payne's grey (for the drawing)

Rosemary & Co brushes

- Ivory short flats Nos. 4, 8, & 12
- Pointed round No. 2/0
- Rigger No. 0/2

* Mainly Wallace Seymour Professional Oil Paint plus Cranfield Artists' Oil Colours



Reference photo

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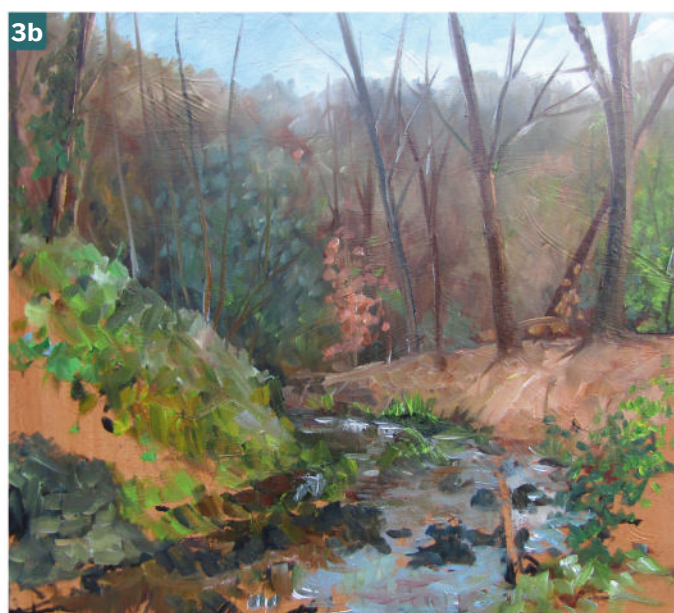
Step 1

Use Payne's grey and a pointed round brush to draw sketchily the scene before you. Keep the sketch light and limited in detail.

Step 2

1 For the first layer of paint, work on the background first. Keep everything painterly and loose to achieve texture, light and distance. To mix many of the early summer greens, use yellow ochre or Naples yellow; and for the darks, try burnt sienna and French ultramarine. Hint at many of the distant trees with quick flicks of a darker French ultramarine and burnt sienna mix.

2 Take the sky to an almost completed stage using cobalt blue and rose flesh tint along with king's blue light and a spot of white. These three colours make up great early summer skies.



Step 3

Now begin to look at the middle and foreground, where you need to apply mid-tones (to give the painting depth). To do this, begin by applying darker colours than you want the finished painting to look, and keep the layers thin so highlights can be built up over the top.

1 Place the trunk and key branch shapes and run them through into the top half of the painting using the side of a flat brush, which will help you achieve the initial shape of the tree.

2 As far as the stream goes, block in the main rocks darkly and consider the darks on the stream bed.

3 Apply a wide range of darker greens and grey-purples on the far left-hand side as a basis to build on and add depth. On the right-hand side look at the darkest areas of the leaf litter and block them in using a range of similar coloured darks onto which you'll build highlights later.

TOP TIP

I sometimes take newspaper with me when I paint *en plein air* in case I apply too much paint to the first layer. I then 'tonk' (see panel) it back using newspaper and rub it with my hand to remove the excess paint.

Tonking...

...is an oil-painting technique, named after the Slade School of Art tutor, Henry Tonks, where you blot wet oil paint with absorbent paper to remove excess oil or create texture.

Step 4

1 On the second layer use almost neat paint; this is why it is important to make sure the first layers are thinly, almost scrubbed on the painting. Lightly dry brush the background with a similar set of colours but with more white added, almost wafting the brush across the surface so not to disturb the original colours.

2 Consider the rest of the painting as regards to lightening it up then place colour rather than painting it in. Start initially with the lighter pink-like burnt sienna on the far bank to describe the sunlit leaf litter using



a range of similar colours and placing them over the original darker mid-tone.

3 At this stage inherit the tree shadows from the darker mid-tones then turn your attention to the rocks and water surface by wafting directionally bright warm greys made from burnt sienna and French ultramarine plus white. Make sure the burnt sienna is more prevalent in this mix.

4 Apply a variety of yellow-greens across the surface of each rock.



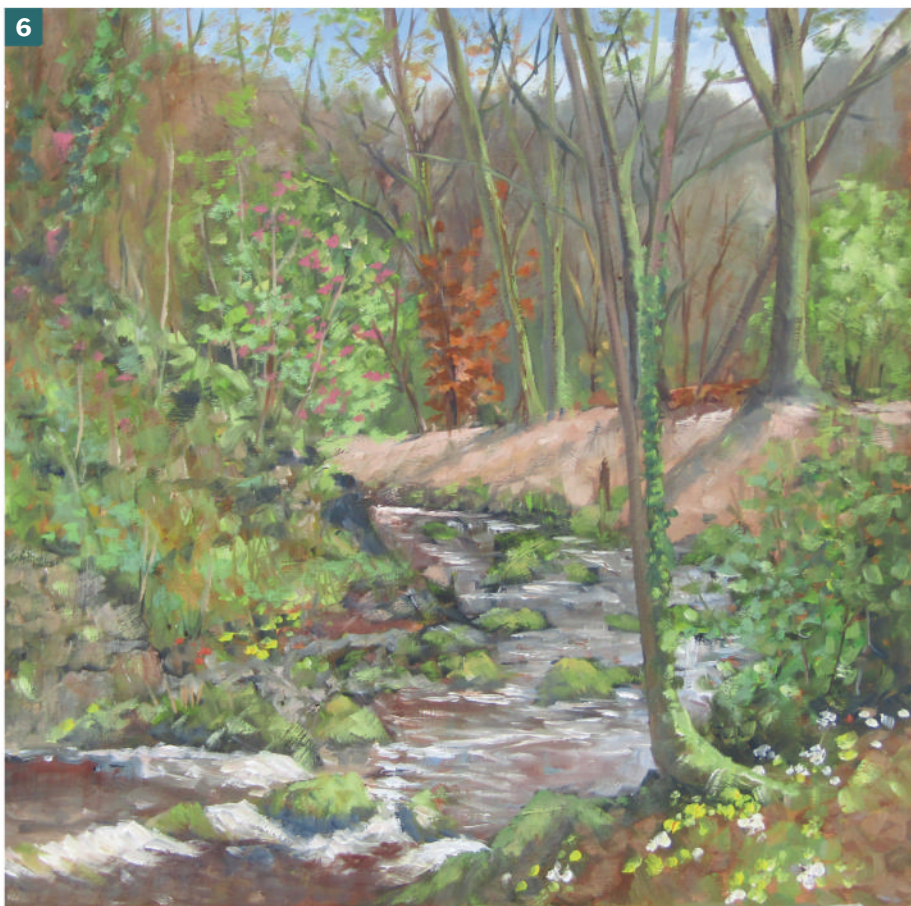
Step 5

1 On the near bank make a variety of marks to indicate the range of lighter greens, oranges and purples that give the impression of foliage and leaf litter on the bank. Add branches to the trees on this side using a rigger, using random marks to create the branches.

2 Place your attention on the background trees to which you mapped in the main trunk and key branches earlier. Now start to

TOP TIP

Dry brush a lighter colour on the surface of the water to achieve the impression of depth. Be bolder with this, the nearer the water is to the front of the painting.



The finished painting *Landscape*, oil, 16x16in. (40.5x40.5cm)

TOP TIP

Branches need to come from all sides of the tree so bring some from the back as well as extending out of the front. Consider the position of the tree in relation to the other trees and make sure your branches fall right in relation to them.

give them depth by adding light to the backs of each of the trees using lemon yellow and French ultramarine blue, and again using a flat brush to waft this up the side of the tree. Use the rigger to apply the branches.

Step 6

1 The last area to look at is the foreground detail and the strength of colour, for instance the holly bush on the far right-hand side being more detailed and use blue-green and the rigger to give it branches.

2 Create the foreground leaf litter using a range of oranges, burnt sienna and purples and randomly mark boldly to bring this area forward.

3 Paint the foreground tree to overlap everything behind it then add small branches and ivy on the right-hand branch.

4 Does the water need finishing touches? This could involve lightly wafting white on, to give the impression of moving and falling water. Sometimes it's better to leave this until it's dry.

Step 7

There may be a few small areas that need touching in once dry to achieve a bold and vivid colour on the painting, such as the blossom, lightly coloured leaves and the oranges on the tree at the back that still has autumn foliage on it. And the painting is complete.



Richard Holland

Richard is an associate member of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists and runs classes and demonstrations throughout the country. Find more about Richard and his work by visiting richardhollandlandscapeartist.co.uk or follow him on Facebook [Richard.Holland.125](https://www.facebook.com/Richard.Holland.125)

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Art clubs

Over to you for the latest news on club exhibitions and activities

Exhibitions

■ Battle and District Arts Group

Summer exhibition and sale of work at Battle Memorial Hall, from 30 July to 9 August. Open 10am to 5pm.

■ Cookham Arts Club

83rd annual exhibition and sale of paintings by local artists at Pinder Hall, Cookham Rise, SL6 9EH, from 12 to 24 August. Open daily from 10am to 6pm; closes at 4.45pm on final day. Admission free.

■ East Kent Art Society

Summer exhibition at St Mary's Art Centre, Sandwich, from 21 to 29 June. Open daily from 10am to 5pm.

■ Milford Art Group

Exhibition of paintings at All Saints Church Hall, Church Hill, Milford SO41 0SQ, from 26 July to 9 August. Open daily from 10am to 5.30pm; and Sundays from 11am to 5.30pm. Admission and parking free.

Visit milfordartgroup.com

■ The North Cotswold Art Association

Annual summer exhibition of art, cards, jewellery and ceramics in The New Warwick Hall, Burford, from 25 to 30 August. Open daily from 10am to 5pm.

■ Reading Guild of Artists

94th annual exhibition at University of Reading L04 Art Building, The Institute of Education London Road Campus, Reading RG1 5AG (What3words: status.flames.marker), until 29 June. Open daily from 10am to 4pm.

■ Romney Marsh Art Society

Exhibition at The Marsh Academy, Station Road, New Romney TN28 8BB, from 2 to 15 August. Open daily from 10.30am to 4pm; closes at 1.30pm on final day. Free parking.

■ Solent Art Society

Exhibition at the Royal British Legion Centre, 155 High Street, Lee-on-Solent, PO13 9BX, from 16 to 25 August. Open daily from 10am to 5pm. Admission free. Visit solentartsociety.co.uk

■ St Mary's Group

Summer art exhibition at Holt Village Hall, The Street, Holt, Trowbridge, BA14 6QH, on 5 and 6 July. Open from 10.30 to 4pm. Refreshments available. Free entry and car parking.



■ Stafford Art Group

Selected exhibition at Cannock Library, Cannock WS11 1AA throughout June and July. Open Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm; and Saturday, 9am to 4pm.

■ Textile Art Group Suffolk

Exhibition on the theme of 'Elements' at Pond Gallery, Snape Maltings IPI7 ISP from 11 to 16 July. Open daily from 11am to 5pm.

Visit www.tags.org.uk

■ Thornbury Art Club

Diamond Jubilee exhibition at The Methodist Church Hall, High Street, Thornbury, BS35 2AQ, from 25 July to 3 August. Open daily from 10am to 6pm, and Sunday from 2 to 4pm.

Visit thornburyartclub.co.uk

■ Village Artists

Exhibition of artwork at The Community Centre, Central Car Park, Lynhurst, Hampshire SO43 7NY, from 16 to 21 August. Open daily from 10am to 5pm; closing at 4pm on final day. Admission free with donation to Honeypot Charity. Disabled access.

■ Warwickshire Watercolourists

Art exhibition at Berkswell Reading Rooms, Meriden Road, Berkswell

Shirley Whyte Oyster

Catchers,
acrylic,
7½x9½in.
(19x24cm) can
be seen at
Thornbury Art
Club's diamond
jubilee exhibition
this summer
(see below left)

CV77BE, from 23 to 25 August. Open daily 10am to 5pm. Admission free.

■ West Wycombe Art Group

Summer exhibition at West Wycombe Village Hall HP14 3AB on 22 August (10am to 5pm); 23 and 24 August (10am to 6pm); and 25 August (10am to 5pm). Admission free.

■ Windermere Art Society

Annual exhibition at Ladyholme Community Centre, Lake Road, Windermere LA23 2JA, from 4 to 16 August. Open daily from 10.30am to 5.30pm; closing at 4pm on final day. Over 150 paintings and hand-crafted greetings cards will be on display. The society welcomes new members and meets every two weeks for workshops and demonstrations.

■ Wokingham Art Society

68th annual summer exhibition at St Paul's Parish Rooms, Reading Road, Wokingham RG41 1EH, from 19 July to 2 August. Open daily from 10am to 5.30pm. Admission free. Disabled access. Car parking and refreshments available. Follow the group on Facebook and Instagram or visit wokinghamartsociety.org.uk

Best in show



Dorking Art Group Patricia Booth *Foam on the Rocks*, acrylic and acrylic ink, (52x64cm) won the *Leisure Painter & The Artist Award*



Tadworth Art Group
Joe Norris,
Salt Path
Sunset, acrylic,
15¾x15¾in.
(40x40cm) won
The Artist Award



Tadworth Art Group
Jacqueline Wilson
Monterey Bay,
oil, 15¾x15¾in.
(40x40cm) won
the *Leisure*
Painter Award

Don't forget

to invite visitors to your exhibitions to vote for their favourite painting in the show. Send us details and a high-resolution image of the winning painting and we will publish it in a future issue of *Leisure Painter*.

For more information email ingrid@tapc.co.uk

Art club challenge

Here are some of the entries to the May issue theme of flowers. If you would like to see your artwork published here, take part in this month's challenge, which invites you to paint a picture on the theme of '**sweet**' to celebrate world chocolate day on 7 July and national ice cream day on 20 July. We highly recommend that you paint this from life! Send your image, its title, medium and dimensions to ingrid@tapc.co.uk by 14 July, titled '**Leisure Painter August Challenge**' for your chance to feature in a forthcoming issue.



Helen Cumming *Catkins and Tulips*, watercolour, 12x16in. (30.5x40.5cm)



Audrey Drynan *Flowers in Jug*, acrylic, 12x10in. (30.5x25.5cm). Audrey is a long-standing member of Gateshead Art Society



Jan Palin *Pot Full*, watercolour, 14x11in. (35.5x28cm)



Jennifer Drake *Foxgloves*, acrylic, 20x8in. (51x20cm)



Julie Wood *Gentle Garden Blooms*, watercolour, 8x11½in. (20.5x29cm). This was inspired by a painting by Julie King (in *Leisure Painter* November 2021). 'I really enjoy painting flowers. It's my favourite way to relax.' Julie is a member of Chevin Watercolour Group

Highlights in your next issue

Leisure Painter & the artist

Welcome to *Leisure Painter's* colour explosion – try bold palettes and paint exciting landscapes

- Colin Joyce picks vibrant acrylics to paint sunrises and sunsets, from Venice to Morocco
- Make sense of greens, light and shadows, and complementary colours to paint a summer lane in watercolour, with Colin Steed
- Sparkling soft pastels are the perfect medium for Rachel McNaughton's summer meadow
- Make unique gifts (or just treat yourself). Paint colourful, fun bookmarks with Liz Chaderton



Elena Parashko



Jem Bowden



Tim O'Brien

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Helen Carter

New next month

- Introducing... John Mitchell as he discusses the techniques he uses to **paint with impaired eyesight**
- Jem Bowden begins a three-part series, all about **composition** – which starts with how to observe like an artist.

You'll also find...

- Elena Parashko's **top ten tips for painting *en plein air***
- How to include **figures in urban settings**, by Tim O'Brien
- The delicate art of drawing **dewdrops on flower petals**, with Helen Carter
- More from David Webb as he paints the **landscape** inspired by the photo (on page 10)

Highlights in the September issue of *The Artist*

- Caroline Saunders is In Conversation with wildlife artist **Hannah Dale** and discovers why bringing nature to communities with little access to wild spaces is so important to her
- Travel with Alan Cotton as he shares his experiences of being a **tour artist with King Charles III** in the light of a new exhibition at Buckingham Palace
- Grahame Booth offers advice on how to select, simplify and **paint a landscape** on a hot summer's day
- Classically-trained artist, Luca Indraccolo demonstrates how he **draws with paint** to create a figure drawing grounded in tradition
- Learn ways to **simplify your subject** with Nicholas Poullis



Hannah Dale



Grahame Booth

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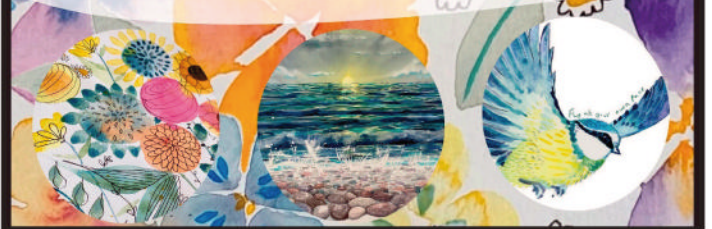
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| Malawi | Warm Heart of Africa |
| Zambia | Large, grey and unmistakable |
| North India | Desert Romance of Rajasthan |

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| Nambia | The Cheetah Republic |
| Spain | A Sojourn in Seville |
| Uzbekistan | Splendours of the Silk Route |
| Cornwall, UK | Boconnoc in Bloom |
| Azerbaijan | The Land of Fire |
| Zambia | Where Leopards Tread |
| South Africa | Africa Chill Out Safari Retreat |
| Wales, UK | Pembrokeshire Paintbox |
| Arctic | Polar Bears and Glaciers |
| Norfolk, UK | Windmill in the Reeds |
| Malawi | Big Game in Wide Open Spaces |
| Zambia | Large, grey and unmistakable |
| Tanzania | Safari and Spice Island in Zanzibar |
| Japan | Floating Landscapes |
| Galapagos | Darwin's Islands |

16-31 Jan
Feb (date tbc)
05-18 Feb
21 Feb-07 March
10-14 March
16-29 April
19-24 April
June (date tbc)
June (date tbc)
July (date tbc)
July (date tbc)
July (date tbc)
14-18 Sept
Sept (date tbc)
Sept/Oct (date tbc)
Oct (date tbc)
Nov (date tbc)
05-18 Dec

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Maxine Relton
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Wildlife Wednesdays with Alice Angus and Mary-Anne Bartlett

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Jane Stroud Editor

WELCOME from the editor

Want to comment on something you've read, or seen?

Email me at theartistletters@tapc.co.uk or visit our website at www.painters-online.co.uk/forum

As we approach World Friendship day (Wednesday July 30), I have been giving some thought to the role friendship plays in the lives of today's artists. Creativity can be a solitary pastime and, of course, there are times when that isolation can be just what you want. But the support and comradeship of other like-minded people, sharing and identifying with friends, is necessary too in order to challenge us as artists and allow us to grow and flourish.

Charles Williams, president of the Royal Watercolour Society, has written for us this month about the forthcoming President's Exhibition at the Bankside Gallery in London, featuring his own work and that of David Ferry, president of the Society of Painter-Printmakers as part of the Bankside Gallery's 45th anniversary celebrations. The mutual respect these artists have for each other is evident and the support each can draw keeps their roles as presidents of long-standing societies current and energised. 'There is also the comradeship,' Charles writes: 'I count some of my oldest friends among artists I've met in exhibiting societies.' Similarly, Karl Terry, our featured professional artist interviewed by Sally Bulgin, draws strength from the four art societies he belongs to and through which he gains focus, pride in his work and, of course, friendship.

Entering the eighth month of his year-long diary documenting his first year as a full-time artist, Rodney Kingston tells us about the help he has gained by taking part in a government-funded 'Business for Creatives' bootcamp where he found the company of other artists, whether in person or via Zoom calls, affirming: 'Spending time with this group of creatives reminded me of the importance of community, even in solo pursuits,' he writes, and I would caveat that with 'especially' when working alone.

I hope that you find that sense of community within these pages, and indeed the wider community of Painters Online, which is here to provide teaching, support and friendship as you go on your artistic journey.

Best wishes

Jane

Jane Stroud Editor



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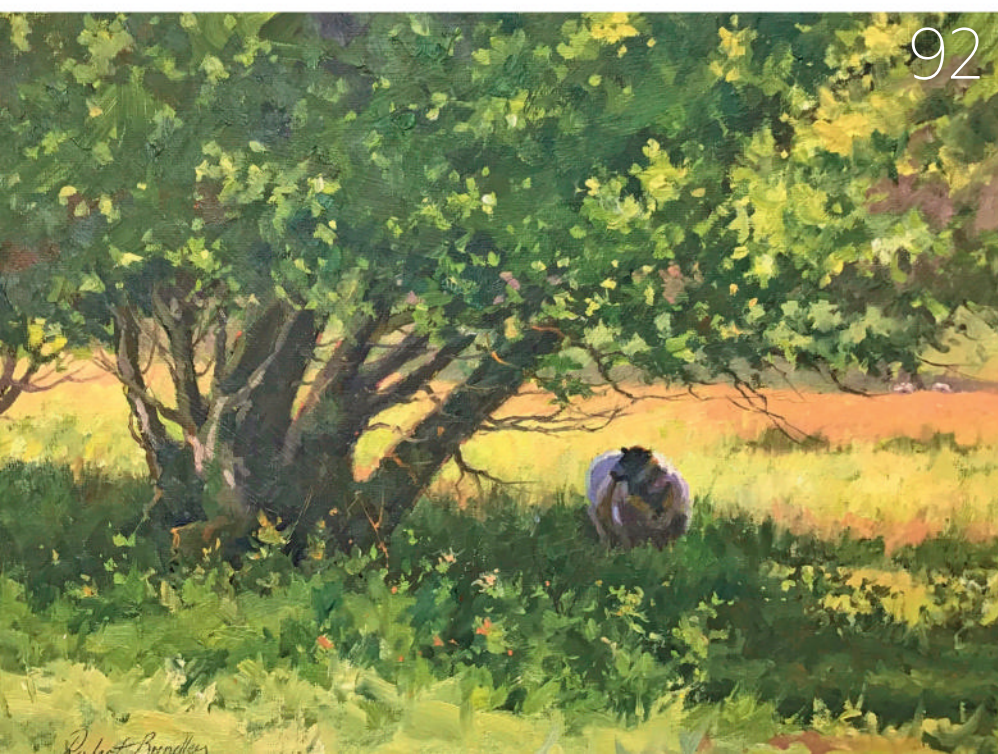
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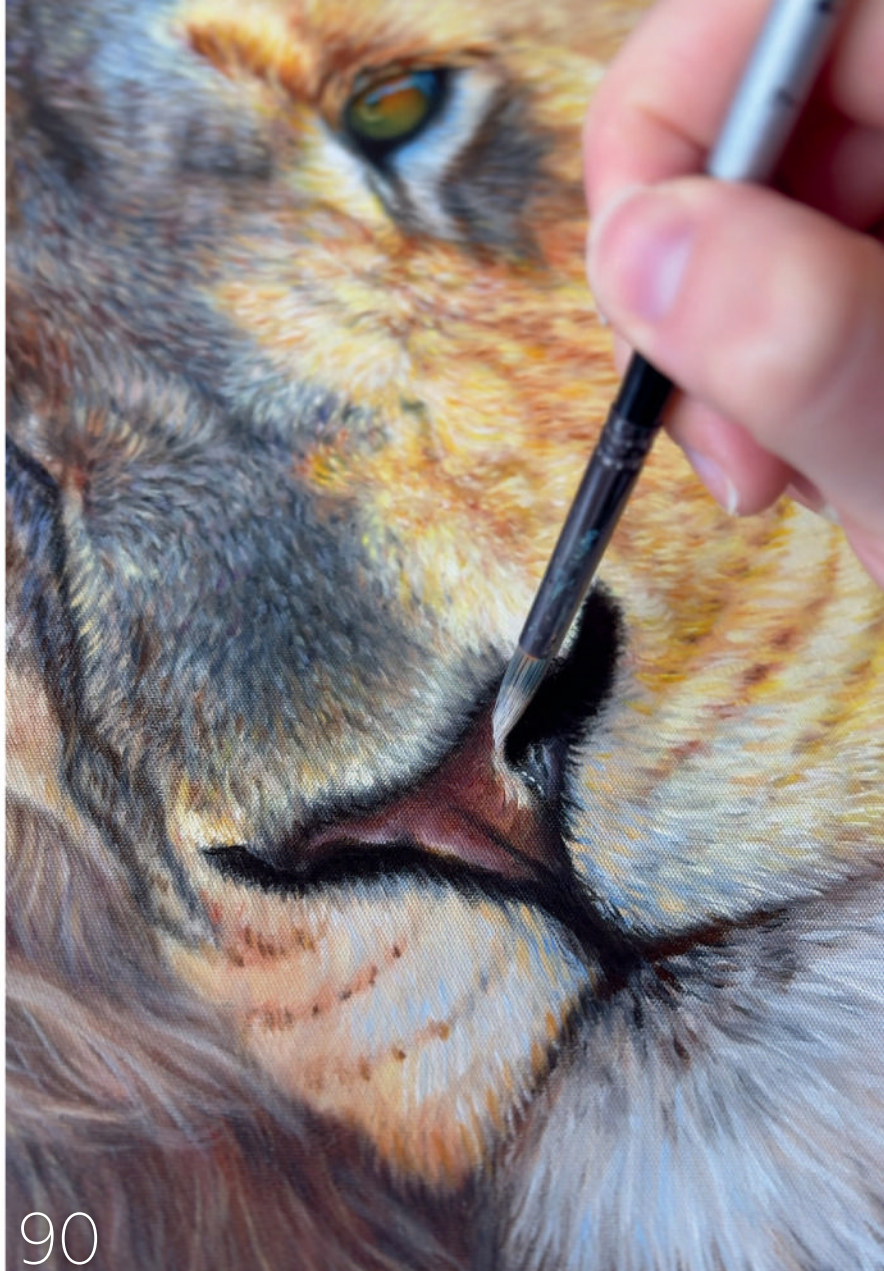




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September 2025 issue

THIS MONTH'S COVER



Martin Taylor *The Broken Ash and Queen Anne's Lace, Leys Lane, Great Houghton*, oil on canvas, 15¼x19½in (40x50cm). See pages 80 to 85.

EDITORIAL CONSULTANTS



David Curtis
ROI, RSMA

has won many awards for his *en plein air* and figurative paintings in both oils and watercolours. He has had several books published on his work as well as DVD films, and exhibits his work extensively.



Haidee-Jo Summers
ROI, RSMA

has won many awards for her *plein-air* and *alla-prima* oil paintings. She is an elected member of the ROI, the author of *Plein Air Painting with Oils* and *Vibrant Oils* and also has a DVD with the same title.

THE ART WORLD

NEWS, INFORMATION AND ONLINE EVENTS IN THE ART WORLD

compiled by Jane Stroud



◀ Mohammed Sami *After the Storm*, Blenheim Art Foundation, Blenheim Palace, Woodstock, July 9 to October 6 2024. Photo: Tom Lindboe



▲ Rene Matic *As Opposed to the Truth*, installation view, CCA Berlin, 2024. Photo Diana Pfammatter/CCA Berlin



▲ Nnena Kalu *Conversations*, Walker Art Gallery, installation view. Courtesy of the artist and Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. Photo: Pete Carr



▲ Zadie Xa with Benito Mayor Vallejo *Moonlit Confessions Across Deep Sea Echoes: Your Ancestors Are Whales, and Earth Remembers Everything*, 2025, installation view. Courtesy of Sharjah Art Foundation. Photo: Danko Stjepanovic

TURNER PRIZE 2025

Visitors to Bradford this year will have an opportunity to see the work of four shortlisted **Turner Prize** artists as they go on show at **Cartwright Hall Art Gallery**, from September 27 to February 22, 2026 as part of the **Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture** celebrations. The artists include: **Nnena Kalu**, **Rene Matic**, **Mohammed Sami** and **Zadie Xa**, selected by members of the Turner Prize jury, chaired by Alex Farquharson, director of Tate Britain. The winner of the 2025 Turner Prize will be announced at an award ceremony in Bradford on December 9.

Nnena Kalu is nominated for her presentation as part of *Conversations* at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (middle right) and *Hanging Sculpture 1 to 10* at Manifesta 15 in Barcelona. Rooted in a process of repeated gestures, her cocoon-like sculptural installations and swirling drawings on paper are highly attuned to architectural space.

Rene Matic captures moments of joy in daily life and has been nominated for their solo exhibition *As Opposed to Truth* at CCA Berlin (top right), in which the artist expressed concerns about belonging and identity.

Mohammed Sami was nominated for his solo exhibition *After the Storm* at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire (above) in which he paints empty landscapes, interiors and items of furniture as metaphors for absent bodies and their memories. And finally, nominated for her presentation *Moonlit Confessions Across Deep Sea Echoes: Your Ancestors Are Whales, and Earth Remembers Everything* with Benito Mayor Vallejo at Sharjah Biennial 16 (right), **Zadie Xa's** work focuses on the sea as a spiritual realm to explore traditions and folklore. Tickets for the exhibition at Cartwright Hall will be available from the summer @BradfordMuseums #TurnerPrize2025 and @bradford_2025 #Bradford2025

OPPORTUNITIES & COMPETITIONS

Check out the latest competitions to enter and make a note of important deadlines

Sending-in days

Guildford House Open

Details: Submissions are now invited for Guildford House Open 2025 – an opportunity for artists working in two and three dimensions to exhibit in a prestigious group show, with a top prize of £1,000 and a solo exhibition at the gallery in summer 2026. The competition is open to all UK-based artists aged 18 and over and entries are invited in any subject, medium and style.

Exhibition: A group exhibition of selected works will go on show at the Guildford House Gallery and the top prize winner will have a solo exhibition at the gallery in the summer 2026.

When: Closes for entries at 5pm on Wednesday October 1.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/guildfordhouseopen-25

The John Ruskin Prize 2026

Details: Entries are now invited to the eighth John Ruskin Prize – a multidisciplinary art prize open to all artists, designers and makers, of all nationalities, aged 18 and over. This year's theme is, 'Patience in Looking, Truth in Making'. Four winners will receive prizes totalling £9,500.

Exhibition: Selected works will go on show at Trinity Buoy Wharf, London from January 29 to February 8, 2026.

When: Closes for entries at 5pm on December 2.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/johnruskinprize-25

Landscape Open 2025

Details: The Salisbury Museum is calling for entries for the Landscape Open at Salisbury – a new annual opportunity for artists working within the *genre* of landscape painting. Works are invited across a range of media, including painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, moving image, textile, print and mixed media.

Exhibition: Selected work will go on show at the Salisbury Museum in Wiltshire, from October 18 to January 25, 2026.

When: Closes for entries at 5pm on August 13.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/landscapeopen

The RP Drawing Prize

Details: The Royal Society of Portrait Painters (RP) is launching a new opportunity for artists – The RP Drawing Prize: Revealing the Human. Celebrating the power and versatility of drawing, the prize is open to artists, designers and makers working in any style or medium that can be considered drawing. The competition is open to artists worldwide, aged 18 and over at any stage in their career.

Exhibition: One-hundred-and-twenty works will be selected to form part of a landmark exhibition at the University of Hull Art Gallery, running from October 2 to November 30. One outstanding artist will also receive the RP Drawing Prize of £5,000.

When: Closes for entries on 5pm on Wednesday August 20.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/rpdrawingprize

The Royal Society of Marine Artists

Details: The Royal Society of Marine Artists seeks submissions of art inspired by the sea and marine environment, including harbours and shorelines, traditional craft and contemporary shipping, creeks, beaches, wildlife and anything that involves tidal water. The exhibition offers several prizes and awards, worth over £5,000.

Exhibition: Selected work will go on show at the Mall Galleries in London from September 18 to 27.

When: Closes for entries at 12 noon on Friday July 25.

Contact: mallgalleries.org.uk/opencalls

The Society of Wildlife Artists

Details: Artists are invited to submit work for exhibition alongside members of the Society of Wildlife Artists at the SWLA 62nd annual exhibition: *The Natural Eye 2025*. All forms of two- and

three-dimensional artwork based on representing the world's wildlife are welcome.

Exhibition: *The Natural Eye 25* can be seen at the Mall Galleries, London from October 16 to 25.

When: Closes for entries at 12 noon on Friday August 22.

Contact: mallgalleries.org.uk/opencalls

The Soho Open

Details: The Soho Housing Association in partnership with Parker Harris announces the launch of The Soho Open – a new exhibition opportunity for artists, makers, designers and creatives based in the UK.

Exhibition: Selected works will go on show at Great Pulteney Street Gallery in Soho, from November 5 to 23.

When: Closes for entries at 5pm on Tuesday September 23.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/thesohoopen25

Wells Art Contemporary 2025

Details: Wells Art Contemporary (WAC) is an international opportunity for innovative visual artists working in all *genres*. Artists can choose whether they wish to exhibit in the gallery or create a site-specific installation.

Exhibition: Selected works will go on show at Wells Cathedral, from October 8 to November 1.

When: Closes for entries for site-specific installations at 5pm on July 1; closes for entries for exhibiting in the gallery at 5pm on July 8.

Contact: artopps.co.uk/opportunities/wells-art-contemporary2025

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A day in the life of **KARL TERRY** RSMA AROI

The Artist contributor, Karl Terry talks to Sally Bulgin about his life and career as a professional artist that he runs alongside his roofing business



Karl Terry has enjoyed a successful career as a professional artist since 2008, exhibiting his work widely, including in the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, The Discerning Eye and with the New English Art Club (NEAC). He is a prolific and passionate *plein-air* painter, who enjoys capturing landscapes and cityscapes throughout the UK and overseas in all weathers and has honed his craft by painting alongside some of the UK's and USA's finest landscape artists. Unusually, Karl continues to run his heritage roofing company alongside his painting career, which gives him the advantage of an alternative steady income, and the freedom to paint whatever inspires him.

Although you still run your roofing company, you combine this with a highly professional approach to your painting practice. Can you describe a typical day?

'Yes, I do still run a heritage roofing company, but I nevertheless consider myself to be a full-time professional artist. I know from talking to many of my peers that I produce more paintings than most of them who only have one job! For years I have tried to keep the two separate, and I guess in a way it was because I didn't want to be labelled as a 'roofer' who paints.

'I've always loved painting and drawing but alas didn't follow my calling. In recent years I have embraced the situation more and have realised that I am quite lucky to have a steady income that allows me to paint whatever I wish rather than second-guessing what people might like.

'As I run my own business and employ staff, I do get to make my own diary. I don't really have a typical day, and it changes through the seasons. I'm primarily a *plein-air* painter so feel I get a better balance between spring and autumn when we have longer daylight hours. During this time, I rise early and try to paint most days either before I go to work or after I finish. I always carry a pochade box and a sketchbook in my vehicle and set out every day with the intention to paint or sketch something – although it doesn't always work out!'

How do you divide your time between managing your company, your studio work, working *en plein air* and the admin involved in being a professional artist?

'My life is very busy and full! I sometimes do not know how I manage but I do. I guess what I do is snatch moments whenever I can to paint before, after and between appointments. I rarely do physical work



◀ **A Bend in the River, oil on board, 12x16in (30.5x40.5cm)**



anymore, and if I did, I don't think I would have the energy to paint. As any serious painter will know, to paint well takes an awful lot of concentration and dedication and contrary to what many think it's exhausting, not relaxing.

'I think having my day job and grabbing these moments has shaped my painting style and approach. As time has been limited, I've developed a shorthand and work quickly, which is very helpful when trying to keep up with nature. I also never tire of painting or run out of enthusiasm. I don't do very much studio work as I prefer to be outside, but I occasionally do larger studio pieces based on my outdoor studies, particularly in the winter. Admin is always done in the evening and often with the help of my patient wife.'

Where is your studio and how do you organise its contents to suit your working practices?

'I'm lucky to have an old village gaol as my studio in the village where I live. It's a quirky, small space consisting of three rooms; two of them originally cells and the third the gaolers' quarters. One even still has its original 19th-century door! I store my paintings and have a table for preparing panels and framing in one room, and the other two hold my drying racks, old leather

armchair, two antique studio easels and my collection of artists' antiques and curiosities.

'Whilst I do paint in the studio I often just sit and reflect on what I've done and use it as a bit of a 'man cave'. The studio also has two very large windows facing the road where I display paintings and it doubles up as a gallery during open studios. Our local Wittersham residents often stop to look and have a chat!'

How important is your membership of professional art societies to your career and success?

'I'm very proud to be a member of the Royal Society of Marine Artists (RSMA), an associate of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters (ROI), a member of The Wapping Group and a member of the Rye Society of Artists. Belonging to all of them has helped me in different ways. Membership of the RSMA and the ROI have been major achievements that I'm proud of in my career and have helped raise my profile. They have also focused my mind to try to produce the very best paintings I can to deserve my place!

'The Wapping Group is like an extended family. It's one of the oldest outdoor painting groups in England (established in 1946) and has 25 members at any one time. I've always been proud to be a member and

▲ *Autumn Light, Rye Harbour*, oil on board, 12x16in (30.5x40.5cm)

since I joined in 2011, I have had support and encouragement from all the other painting members. It also gives me an excuse to take Wednesdays off during our painting season which runs from April until October.

'Lastly the Rye Society of Artists is close to home and is a professional society of artists which I enjoy belonging to and has helped raise my profile locally. All four societies have annual shows to which I submit work every year and through being a member of each I have made lots of artist friends.'

What is your relationship with private galleries in terms of solo and/or joint exhibitions and sales of your work?

'I have exhibited in lots of galleries over the past 20 years both in the UK and abroad. Currently I'm only showing with three, with whom I have had solo and joint shows. I'm with the Panter & Hall Gallery in London, the Rye Art Gallery and Dacre Art in Scotland. As well as this I have work in each of the societies' annual shows and accept the occasional commission. I have also been artist in residence at the Gallivant Hotel, Camber Sands for the past five years, so I have no shortage of places to put my work.'



▲ **Old Chestnut, oil on board, 16×20in (40.5×51cm)**

Do you have a direct relationship with the public via a website and social media?

'I do have both a website and a social-media presence with Instagram and Facebook. I haven't sold many paintings directly from any of these, but they are good for letting people know what I'm doing. Of the three, Instagram is the one I use most and the one that creates the most interest and feedback. I also enjoy connecting with fellow artists throughout the world.'

Do you teach painting and if so, how does this affect your own working practices?

'I do occasionally give workshops and demos to art societies. I usually really enjoy it and get good feedback. I like to chat and recall stories and, as Ken Howard OBE RA once said to me, 'It's quite easy talking about yourself'. I also find that when I do demos, I learn a fair bit from others as

well and it's good to help analyse your own work. If I didn't have my day job, it's something I'd do more of.'

Who has had the greatest influence on your own practice, and how do you stay motivated?

'It's difficult to say who has had the most influence on my own practice as I have been helped along the way by so many. I've been very fortunate and privileged to become friends and to paint with most of my heroes. My first major influence was my old art teacher, Chris Daynes. Without him I would not be an oil painter. I met him by chance in early 2000 and enrolled on one of his oil painting courses, which was cancelled. He very kindly let me go to his studio to show me the basics for a few months. One Christmas he lent me a book on the East Anglian artist Edward Seago. On the inside cover there was a photograph of him walking over the dunes with a French easel.

TERRY'S TOP FIVE TIPS FOR ASPIRING PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS

1. Don't be in a rush to turn your hobby into a profession. Hone your craft and establish relationships with galleries and so on before you make the move. Making a living from painting is no easy task.
2. Paint what you love and be true to yourself. If you paint what you think others will like, they probably won't!
3. Have some savings or some form of passive income.
4. Be prepared to put in the hours, work very hard and learn to live with rejection.
5. Have a supportive partner!

I went out straight away and bought two, one for Chris and one for me. We've been painting together outside ever since.

'I also became great friends with Ken Howard OBE, RA and Fred Cuming RA (who was my neighbour) both of whom helped me tremendously. I was one of the founding members of British Plein Air Painters (BPAP) and am friends with all the members and we regularly have painting trips together and learn from each other. During Lockdown I took an online colour theory course with my friend Skip Whitcomb who is a legend in the USA and last year I took a workshop with another British/American artist friend Jill Carver. That was interesting as I was the only guy among 17 women!

Whilst painting is great fun, there always seems so much to learn, and painting with others seems to be the best way. Making so many like-minded friends has been the huge bonus to this journey and was completely unexpected. Most recently I have learnt a lot from my regular painting friend Tom Marsh who is the master of simplicity; he's always telling me to stop. Sometimes I do, sometimes I don't!

Do you enter open competitions?

'I don't often enter competitions as I don't really consider myself to be that competitive. I also don't tend to do my best work when there is the added pressure of having to perform. The first award I won was having two paintings accepted into the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition in 2008. They were both bought by Ken Howard which is how I first met him. I have been juried into the largest *plein-air* festival in America – *Plein Air Easton* – three times, the third being this coming July. It's a wonderful event with 58 artists invited, mostly American. Last time I won a small prize, but

'BEST ADVICE I'VE HAD FROM OTHER PAINTERS'

1. Paint what you see not what you know.
2. I like Skip Whitcomb's advice: 'The simpler the statement the stronger the message'.
3. I often think of Velasquez's quotation: 'Look for the colour in grey and the grey in colour.' It's so apt for painting landscapes in northern Europe!
4. Ken Howard's best word of advice: 'Paint what moves first.' The following day I was painting him, and he saw me. He packed up his gear winked at me and said: 'Remember the advice I gave you yesterday?'. Luckily, I'd got most of him in!
5. Be careful with signatures especially if putting work into society shows. Generally, the members don't like big flashy ones. I once painted with Peter Brown in India. He said, 'that's a lovely painting mate'. Then I signed it, and he came back and said, 'Now you've ruined it!'.



▲ **Hawthorn Blossom, Harry's Field**, oil on board, 12×16in (30.5×40.5cm)

the real prize was just being there.

'I occasionally enter the online American *Plein Air Salon* and have won several of their *plein-air* awards but don't really think any of them have had much influence on my career. The biggest reward is the activity of painting itself, and the friends I've made on the way.'

Finally, how do you price your work?

'My prices are the same in all the galleries and I generally put them up once a year to keep up with inflation and framing costs. They range from about £650 for a 6×6in to several £1,000 for larger ones. The average size tends to be 12×16in, which sell for around £1,200.'

TA



● For more information about Karl's career, awards, forthcoming exhibitions and to view more images of his work, visit karlterry.co.uk or find him on Instagram at [instagram/terrykarl](https://www.instagram.com/terrykarl)



Sheep and the Setting Sun, oil on board, 8×16in (20×40.5cm)

SHAPE, COLOUR, ACTION!

Caroline Saunders talks to *The Artist* prize winner, **Valérie Pirlot** about her fresh and spontaneous *alla prima* style, letting light take centre stage

Valérie Pirlot

worked as a graphic designer for several years before her passion for oils gradually took over and one day she decided to quit the design job to be a full-time artist. In recent years, she has been inspired to paint live events such as weddings, parties, fairs, circus shows and music festivals. For the past few years, Valérie has been invited to the Glastonbury Festival to capture the spirit of the event with paint. Valérie is a member of the Royal Institute of Oil Painters and the Bath Society of Artists. See more of her work at valeriepirlot.com



Awarded *The Artist* prize at the annual Royal Institute of Oil Painters' (ROI) exhibition, self-taught Belgian artist, Valérie Pirlot works predominately in the great outdoors. Depicting the essence of a subject in a few brushstrokes, she makes every single one count. She generally produces a series of ten to 30 paintings until her inspiration takes her elsewhere. 'I cherish my freedom as an artist and I love not knowing what will inspire me tomorrow.' Valérie gets a vast amount of joy from capturing the beauty of her surroundings with freshness and passion. She tackles a wide variety of subjects but her focus is simply the light and how it affects shapes and colours.

As soon as Valérie discovered painting *en plein air*, she was hooked. Working in front of the subject remains her favourite way to paint. 'All the senses are stimulated, you have to rush to capture the light before it changes, and the colours are always richer seen with your own eyes. In a weird way, being restricted with time or facing harsh conditions (rain, wind, crowd, and

'Life goes fast, and we are only catching glimpses of it. This is what I try to depict with paint: an emotion, an impression, a moment, a feeling of light that will be gone in just a few minutes.'

so on) often pushes me to jump outside of my comfort zone and be bolder with my choices, which ultimately achieves better results.

'Life goes fast, and we are only catching glimpses of it. This is what I try to depict with paint: an emotion, an impression, a moment, a feeling of light that will be gone in just a few minutes.' Whenever Valérie witnesses something that moves her, she gets the instant urge to express it in paint. She only feels at peace when the painting is done, somehow reassured that the fleeting moment is now captured on canvas.

Firm foundations

Art and creativity run in Valérie's family.

Both her grandmothers were fantastic musicians (piano and violin). Her great grandfather was a keen *plein-air* painter; her mother a writer and photographer; her brother a graphic designer; her sister's interests include photography and interior design; and her father is passionate about music. 'As far as I can remember I have always had the urge to express myself artistically and my family has been very supportive of it.'

Until the age of 20 Valérie's real passion was playing the piano. She then discovered oil painting and fell in love with the medium. It also coincided with a student trip to Paris where she studied the Impressionists at the Musée d'Orsay. JMW

Turner, Edward Seago and Joaquín Sorolla were among her first sources of inspiration. Now her inspiration also comes from contemporary artists, many of whom she is lucky enough to call friends.

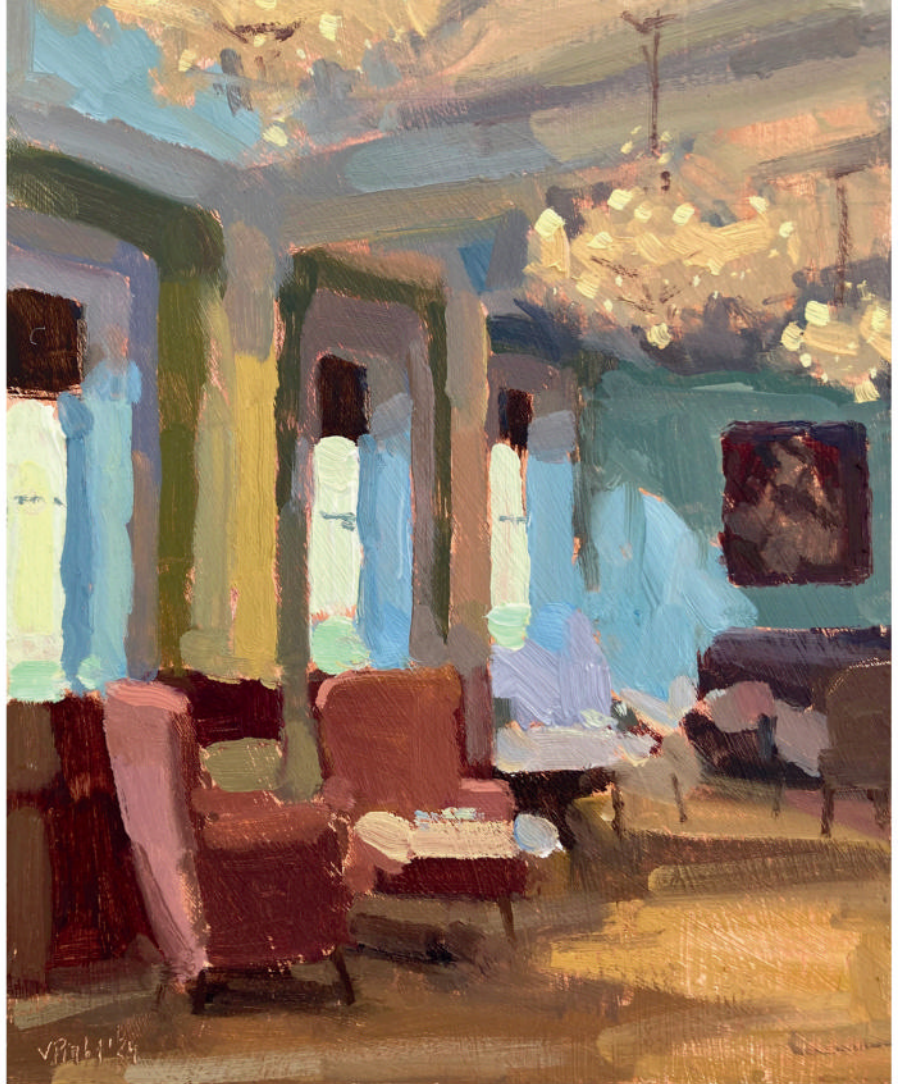
'I learned by painting a lot, often and making lots of mistakes. Every painting is a way to become a better painter. I always look forward to the next one. A DVD I strongly recommend is *Edward Seago Oil Landscape Techniques* with Suffolk artist Miles Fairhurst, who made a lifelong study of Seago's palette. It greatly helped me to build a good solid palette of my own. My paintings looked more harmonious straight away. To this day I'm using roughly the same palette. I choose a warm or cool version of the primaries, depending on the result I want to achieve. The earthy colours enable me to add warmth and de-saturate my mixes.'

Living in Bath has played an important role in her development as an artist. 'I was born and grew up in Belgium. When I was 21, I visited Bath as a tourist and completely fell in love with the city and wished I had a reason to stay there. By some great turn of fate, on the same night I conveniently found my reason to stay, as I met my husband in a pub. He was on stage playing drums in a gig. Twenty years later and we are still living in Bath, married with two children and still feeling inspired by this beautiful city.'

Valérie often paints interiors from pictures she has taken in beautiful private homes

► **My Garden, oil on board, 11x14in (28x35.5cm)**

'This is my humble and beloved little garden in Bath. It's no Versailles but I love it nonetheless. This was painted during a demo I did for a local art club. I picked this image to show that beauty and subjects can be found everywhere, and sometimes in the most mundane scenes. When I showed the audience the picture reference for this one, I don't think many people found it worthy of being a painting subject. And yet, this scene has everything I could wish for in a subject: on a purely abstract level, it has light versus dark, cool versus warm, strong lines, shapes, and structures contrasting with the natural curves of the foliage. On a more obvious, meaningful level, it captures a daily domestic scene that touches me because it's everyday life. The laundry is drying in the sun, the cherry blossom is in bloom, the grass needs cutting, and soon someone will open that door to ask: "What's for dinner Mum?" The dark foreground, treated in a very rough simple manner is there to enhance the focal point in the sun, which is treated with thicker, sharper, more saturated brushwork.'



▲ **Blue Walls, The Francis Hotel, Bath, oil on board, 10x8in (25.5x20cm)**

'What attracted me to this subject was the lovely balance of cool and warm tones. The cool light flooding through the window was treated with cool mixes of blues and greens, which contrasted well with the warm glow of the chandeliers. There are also enough dark elements to contrast with those areas of light. I like imperfections in a painting and often use brushes too big for the job so the marks are bold and maybe a bit wobbly, to avoid being too detailed or tight.'

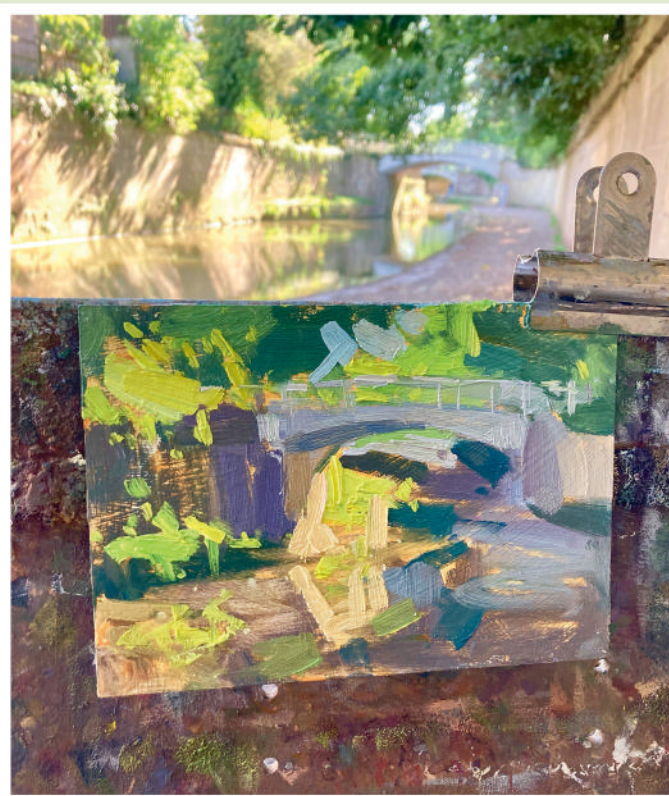




ABOVE **Sydney Gardens, Bath, End of Summer** – oil on board, 9×12in (23×30.5cm)

ABOVE RIGHT **Sydney Gardens, Bath, End of Summer** – oil sketch, oil on board, 5×7in (12.5×18cm)

'One of my favourite places to paint in Bath is Sydney Gardens, a Grade II listed park dating from 1795. It is the only remaining Georgian pleasure garden in the UK. I love its beautiful bridges and magical foliage reflections on the Kennet and Avon canal. It's a place where I know I'll always find inspiration. I went painting there on a late summer's day and started with a 9×12in board to capture the scene. It wasn't about painting a bridge but rather a painting of late summer light falling on the foliage and water. I enjoyed varying the brushstrokes to tackle the various elements: the water is treated with thin scrubby marks, the bridge without too much detail, while the foliage here is the star of the show with bold, thick brushmarks loaded with saturated paint. After finishing the painting I set myself a challenge. How could I simplify this even more? What would be the essence of the painting if I had to restrict myself to even fewer brushstrokes? What could I get away with leaving out? To answer those questions, I had fun doing a quick 5×7in study simplifying the scene even more. Most painters like to do a small study before attempting a larger size, but for me the fun is usually to scale down a painting to see how far I can push the abstraction. It was also interesting to see how the light had already changed between the two paintings.'



or hotels. 'Whenever I paint from photos, I force myself to paint as quickly and with as much energy as if it was from life. I don't like to get lost in details so I ignore unnecessary information and focus on what matters; the essence.' Sometimes she looks at a reference picture at a really small scale so that she cannot see the details, or she might blur it in Photoshop or even remove her glasses while painting.

A major breakthrough for Valérie was the day she started to see things in an abstract way. 'It's the famous "paint what you see, not what you think you see". The brain is not always an ally when it comes to painting, and I often have to silence it when it tells me what a person or a tree "should look like". For example, a "white" house in the shade can actually look dark purple. My brain tells me to paint it lighter, but I have to trust my eyes and the result is surprisingly more realistic.' Valérie now forces herself not to see people, landscapes, or particular objects; all she sees are shapes, colours, and light begging to be captured with paint.

Rather than creating the same level of detail throughout the painting surface, Valérie likes to have areas for the eye to rest. 'I think a painting needs to breathe. I often start loose everywhere then work more on the focal point (often the sunlit area). It is not a strict rule but I tend to make that specific area more saturated, contrasted, detailed with extra brushstrokes and hard

edges and use thicker paint, while leaving the darker areas looser, thinner, and less saturated.'

Depicting light

Valérie claims a good painting often has a good flow, so the eye can travel across it without feeling stuck or overwhelmed. 'When depicting light, if the elements are too light or too vivid or too warm, then the other elements in the painting are penalised and the attention is taken away from the focal point. When one element is wrong, the whole painting can collapse. Darks are needed for the lights to show, greys for the colours to shine and cool areas for the warm parts to stand out.'

Small oil sketches – up to 5×7in – which take only about 20 minutes to complete, provide an essential part of Valérie's painting practice. They serve various purposes: a warm up when painting *en plein air*, to get the first impression of the place; a test for the colours and composition before tackling a larger size; a record of colours and shapes to incorporate as ideas in other works or an exercise to simplify the subject and capture its essence. This consists of scaling down a painting to the smallest possible size.

Light, notably the way the sun falls onto the subject and creates areas of light and dark, catches Valérie's eye in the first instance. Deciding the best way to build a

► **Cliffs at Kynance Cove, oil on board, 6½×8in (16.5×20cm)**

'Painted in Cornwall *en plein air* from the top of the cliff on a sunny but windy day, this was a small oil sketch produced to capture the colours of the place quickly. For me, Cornwall is all about the beautiful mix of greens and blues in the water contrasting with the roughness of the rocks around it. This is more a colour study than a precise drawing so I kept the paint treatment very loose and tried to convey the energy of the place with directional brushstrokes.'

▼ **Watching Sunset from Above the Park, oil on board, 10×7in (25.5×18cm)**

'For the past few years I've had the privilege of painting live at Glastonbury Festival, capturing the spirit of the event. I go there most of the week and walk around the place with my easel, stopping anytime something catches my eye. As an artist I am spoilt for subjects: vibrant stages, colourful crowds and beautiful surrounding countryside. This painting (below) was painted at my favourite place at Glastonbury, from the hill above the park overlooking the whole festival. It was sunset on Wednesday evening, the day the doors open to the public. People don't



gather around the stages because there are no gigs at this point, but instead like to come to this beautiful quiet place to enjoy the sunset, which often coincides with the summer solstice. I'm not the only one under the charm of this place. I witnessed three

proposals in the crowd during the time it took me to paint this. I simply love the way the evening light falls onto the people, shining on the top of heads, wrapping like a glow around people's bodies and casting long shadows on the grass.'





◀ **Winter Landscape, River Avon, oil on board, 14×16in (35.5×40.5cm)**

'This was painted *en plein air* on a blissful day at Dundas Aqueduct near Bath. Winter is definitely my favourite painting season. It takes a long time getting ready and wrapped up but once you make it out of the house, you are rewarded by the most gorgeous colours in nature: vibrant ochres and reds, golden yellows, frosty greens, and a crisp light you just can't get in other seasons. For this painting I decided to be brave and go for the largest *plein-air* size I've ever done. I kept it as loose and fresh as possible. I applied bold and confident brushstrokes without feeling the need to blend the marks. There is a good "flow" in this painting that makes the eye travel from the river to the hills, bouncing on the rounded shapes of the trees. The grass in the foreground gives breathing space for the eye and enhances the parts in the sun.'

painting around this focal point, she tests various compositions using her fingers to frame the scene. 'Looking at my paintings, I realise many follow a similar "recipe". Often the focal point is off-centre, probably in the top third of the painting, with a darker foreground, and sometimes with a few light elements leading the way to the focal point. I often remind myself that not every element can be the star of the show. Many elements must take a back step as a "supporting act" setting up the scene to guide the eye towards the focal point. I tend to make all these decisions before I start painting.'

Valérie starts by applying a thin wash of ground colour to tint the pre-primed board (primed with three coats of Michael Harding non-absorbent acrylic primer). 'I will choose a pink wash for a crisp cold winter day, and orange for a hot summer day, or a neutral grey for a still-life setup. A base colour has two aims: it brings harmony and atmosphere to the painting, but it also omits unwanted white gaps.'

A very basic drawing is produced (just a few lines to map the main shapes and define the horizon) before she tackles the painting stage. Working across the whole painting, she first blocks in the main shapes then divides these into smaller shapes filling in the whole painting as quickly as she can. 'Winsor & Newton water-soluble oils are Valérie's preferred choice. 'I decided to switch to water-soluble when I was pregnant to avoid the toxic fumes of solvents and brush cleaners. I have never looked back.'

Valérie's colour scheme consists of some warm and cool primary colours: permanent rose, cadmium red hue, cerulean blue hue,



▲ **In the shed, oil on board, 10×12in (25.5×30.5cm)**

'This is my father-in-law's workshop/shed. I went in there to wax some wood for a shelf and quickly got distracted by the fact it would make a lovely painting subject. My father-in-law wondered why on earth I would want to paint his messy shed but I tried to explain how I found the combination of shapes, light and colour so appealing. He said it's a reminder he needs to tidy it but I'm glad it was messy when I painted it! It is another example of how seeing things in an abstract way can help me find a subject. I started the painting with a warm tint for the background that is still visible, poking through parts of the painting. I purposely left some areas unfinished to go with the look of the rough and messy place.'

French ultramarine, cobalt blue hue, lemon yellow and cadmium yellow pale hue; some earthy colours: burnt sienna, burnt umber, raw sienna yellow ochre, as well as titanium white and Naples yellow hue. She prefers using hues to the real pigments as they are often considered less toxic to work with. The only premixed colour she uses is phthalo green (yellow shade) which is needed when painting something artificial or manmade such as a bridge, a vase or a jumper, and so on.

Rosemary & Co synthetic brushes from the Ivory range are a reliable choice. She likes rounded filberts with short handles because she paints from the wrist, close to the painting. 'They are perfect for applying *impasto* smoothly and pushing the paint around rather than absorbing it. My texture usually comes from loading the brush with a lot of paint and placing a thick brushstroke that leaves the marks of the brush.'

Valérie tends to work with a lot of brushes at the same time as she uses one brush per colour, and then holds it in her left hand until she needs it again. 'At the end of the painting I often have 20 brushes in my hand! It saves time as I don't have to wipe them between every stage and it saves paint too. But I must admit it does look a bit ridiculous!'

TA



▲ **Teacup and Marbles, oil on board, 10×10in (25.5×25.5cm)**

'One of my painting obsessions has been teacups. What's not to love about them? The shape, the colours, the delicate decoration, and the way the light plays hide and seek around the cup and saucer. The inclusion of the spoon, marbles and the vase is another way to play with light, reflections and shadows. It was painted from life outdoors so I had to be quick and placed the shadows first as I knew they would keep moving during the session. It's a playful subject and I painted it by looking at things in an abstract way, without any preconceptions of what something should look like but just recording what I saw.'



▲ **Watering the Vegetable Garden Under the Evening Sun, oil on board, 10×12in (25.5×30.5cm)**

'This is my sister watering her vegetable plot on a summer's evening. I like the way the sun is glowing around the silhouette and turns the foliage to gold. Aside from the figure, I think the focus is probably the sun shining through the water coming out of the hosepipe. These are the simple things that catch my eye everyday and make me want to pick up a paintbrush.'



● Valérie received *The Artist Award* in the 2024 ROI exhibition for her painting *Kitchen Morning Light*. The 2025 ROI exhibition takes place at the Mall Galleries, London towards the end of the year. Entry to the 2025 exhibition will open shortly. For up-to-date information go to mailgalleries.org.uk



The colour GREEN

Martin Taylor encourages you to 'mix, taste and enjoy' the colour green. Here he describes how he finds his perfect summer greens

Emotionally there is something calm about the colour green. Summer lawns, picnics on the grass, a walk in the park, leaves of so many shades of one colour on show in nature; it soothes the soul. Yet, be careful, it is also the colour of envy.

During the winter months the landscape is laid bare; the trees stark often against grey skies. It is fundamental, elemental, linear and graphic, often monochrome and lacking in colour. It is easier to see the structure, the bare bones as it were. Autumn has its own colours and after the spring an awakening of new fresh growth. As the summer settles in and the trees fill, I used to wonder how

to capture the lush green fullness of it all. Green is a predominant and obvious factor.

Colour palette

Determined to work *en plein air* as much as possible, I worked initially and for many years exclusively in watercolour. It was mainly a matter of convenience and practicality in the field. In the beginning, as a purist, I didn't use white and gradually through experimentation narrowed my colours down to 12. A limited palette, these are: lemon yellow; cadmium yellow; Indian yellow; cadmium orange; yellow ochre; burnt sienna; cerulean; French ultramarine; Prussian blue; black; Vandyke brown; and

Winsor violet. There are no reds or white here and of these, seven are blues and yellows. Since I started working with oil, I do use white and, of course when needs must, some reds.

We all know from our school days the basics of colour mixing: the three primary colours – red, yellow and blue – and that mixing them together makes the three secondary colours – orange, purple and green. Now let's go a stage further and explore the mixing of green.

First, a look at the yellows. Midway in the colour wheel is pure yellow. Lemon yellow veers towards the blue directions. Lemons compared to oranges are more acidic and have a greener tendency like limes and so lemon yellow is very conducive to making a good green. We must consider the colour value of the yellow we use even though it is always light. Cadmium yellow leans more towards the red and is slightly darker in hue, so it's great for making orange. I only need these two yellows – they are plenty. Looking at manufacturers' names and the number of yellow products on the market can be extremely confusing, therefore keep it simple.



► **Badby Woods, oil on board, 24¾×20in (63×51cm)**



‘A note here on ready-made greens. If you start with these, all are perfectly fine, but I prefer to mix them myself.’

Now to the blues. I don't generally use cobalt, unless very occasionally in skies, but it is pretty much midway on the colour wheel. I prefer to use cerulean, which leans towards the yellow, so, mixed with lemon yellow, makes a very good green. French ultramarine is darker; good for the higher deeper blue in skies. Mixed with lemon yellow it makes a good dark green. With cerulean and French ultramarine, I have enough blues. I include Prussian blue mainly because of its dark, rich quality. It's useful when mixing very dark greens, but be careful as it is so powerful.

Mix yellow and blue and you will make green. But if you use any of the colours where red is involved, you are going to veer away from the pure. Back to the colour wheel: mixing the three primaries will make brown. One secondary and one primary will also make brown: orange and blue, green and red, yellow and purple. Depending on the proportions, all have yellow and blue with some additional red.

Once you have made a good green, it is sometimes necessary to add a touch of red, via orange or purple, but be aware that this will make the green tend towards brown. So, the whole variety of green and colour mixing opens up.

► **September, Northamptonshire, oil on board, 29½×23¼in (75×59cm)**

BLACK AND WHITE

A word of caution now with black and white. It is my opinion that black and white are void of colour. There is colour and then there is black and white, like in photography. This may be a subject for discussion in another article. Using black and white takes you into another dimension. Black can be dirty and will muddy your colours; white takes you into the pastel shades, so be careful when using either of these when you mix your colours.



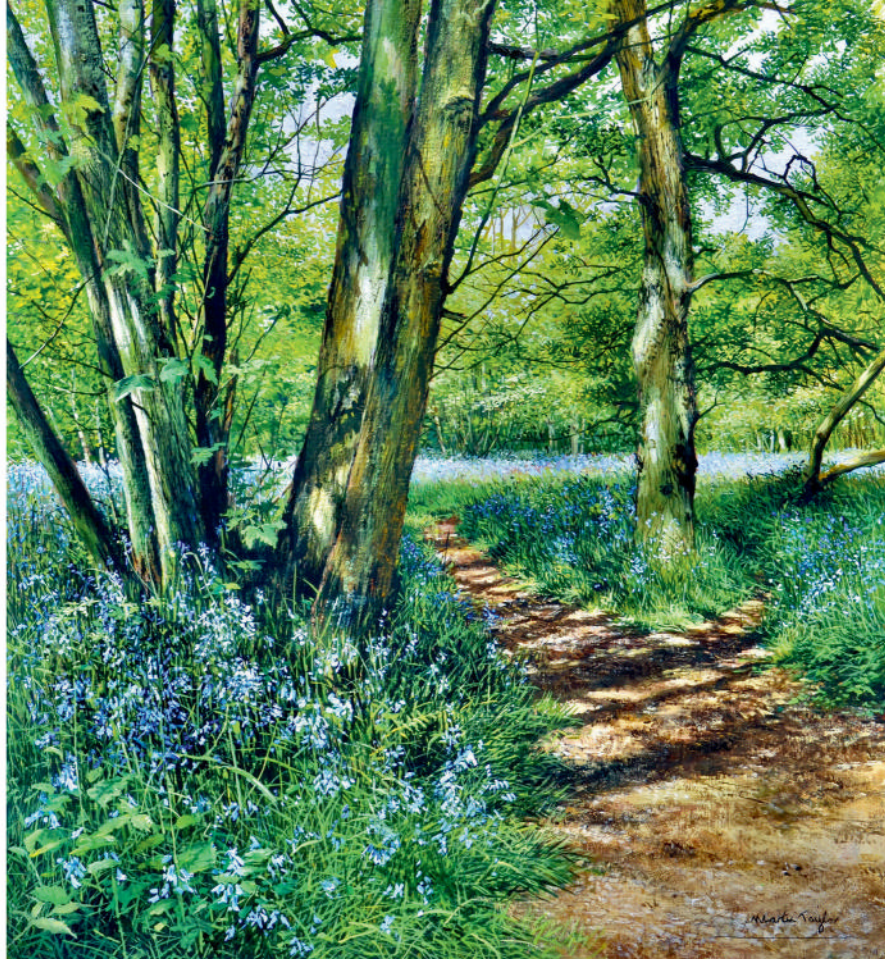


OILS

► **Bluebell Copse**, oil on board, 11½×11¼in (32×28.5cm)

A note here on ready-made greens. If you start with these, all are perfectly fine, but I prefer to mix them myself. For example, take the colour olive green. Oddly black and lemon yellow makes a good olive green. Viridian is another powerful colour and like Prussian blue can really dominate. It consists of a blue, which you won't find in nature. I never use it in landscape painting. When I see it in other artists' work, it jars – it just looks wrong to me. I love it as a jewel-like colour on its own, like alizarin crimson and Prussian blue, but there is an unnatural quality about it that I have never seen in the field.

Proportions are crucial in colour mixing and are subjective and personal to each and everyone's senses. It is intuitive and like seasoning in cooking, knowledge comes through experience and experimentation.





The permutations are endless and colour mixing is so fundamental in painting that it is an endless joy to continue to experiment and find out what happens when you add a little more of this and perhaps a little more of that. It's magic and just like the chef tasting the dish along the way: mix, taste and enjoy!

TA

▲ ***The Broken Ash and Queen Anne's Lace, Leys Lane, Great Houghton*, oil on canvas, 15¼×19¼in (40×50cm)**

◀ ***Montgombie Copse*, oil on board, 11¼×15¼in (30×40cm)**

Martin Taylor

studied at the Ealing School of Art, Wimbledon School of Art and Goldsmiths. Now based in Northamptonshire, Martin's work reflects a love of nature, featuring detailed studies of the countryside that surrounds his studio – a converted stable on a farm. Having previously worked with watercolours for years, he now uses oils, finishing work in the studio. Martin has won awards through the Royal Watercolour Society and exhibits in exhibitions in Northamptonshire and London. He was one of the pod artists featured in the 2018 series of *Sky Arts Landscape Artist of the Year*, and is currently represented by the Gladwell & Patterson Gallery in Knightsbridge, London. His work is held in collections across the UK and the USA. Find out more at martintaylorartist.com

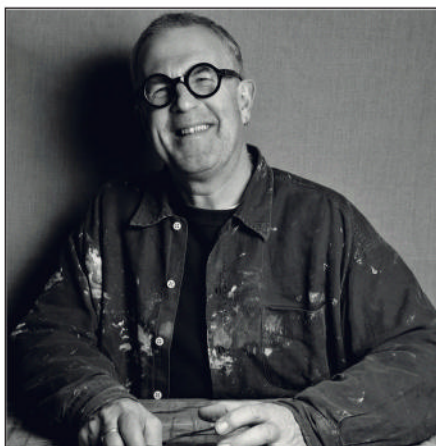




▲ Charles Williams **Big White Bear**, watercolour, 15×22in (38×56cm)

The Presidents' Exhibition

President of the Royal Watercolour Society, **Charles Williams**, takes a closer look at the role of the RWS and RE – their aims, ambitions and mission in today's world



Charles Williams

is the president of the Royal Watercolour Society and member of the New English Art Club. Since leaving the RA Schools in 1992 he has consistently maintained a studio and exhibited regularly in London, the UK, Europe and the US, making paintings, sculpture and watercolours. Interested in the role of the visual arts in the contemporary world, he has written two books on drawing and painting, and many articles for this magazine, and others, including open publications with www.susakpress.com. He is currently represented by New Art Projects, London.

In celebration of its 45th anniversary, the Bankside Gallery in London presents an exhibition of the work of the surviving presidents and past presidents of its two illustrious exhibiting societies, the Royal Watercolour Society (RWS) and the Royal Society of Painter-Printmakers (RE). It is by way of thanks for the work that they do: with associate members, honorary members, honorary retired members, and the regular members, each society's membership is somewhere around a hundred souls. Each elects its membership, so as to claim an excellence



based on the quality of the work rather than its commercial advantage. Figureheads and representatives of the larger membership, the presidents are there as leader and guide.

It's a lot of artists. A lot of different ideas, opinions, skillsets and inclinations. What do they gain from membership? Scheduled exhibitions of the work of each society each year, some extra shows which may mix the work of the two societies, and a level of representation. The societies both have active education and outreach programmes as well. There is also the comradeship – I count some of my oldest friends among artists I've met in exhibiting societies – and there is the validation of being elected by your fellow artists to be one of their number.

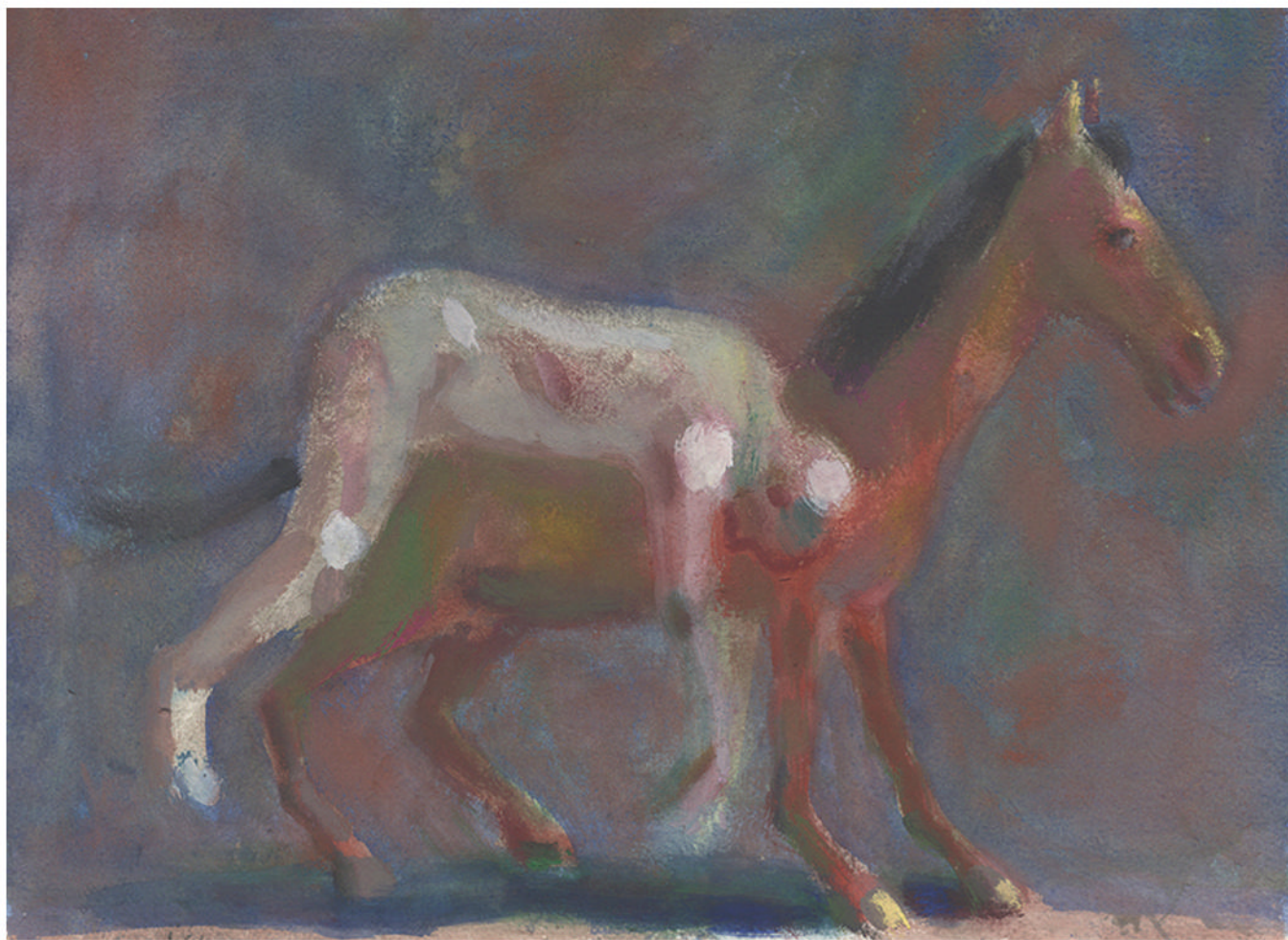
I have the great honour to be the current president of the RWS. There have been 34 others, including some famous names (famous if you are familiar with the minutiae of British Art), because it was on Friday November 30, 1804 that the first meeting of The Society Associated for the Purpose of Establishing an Annual Exhibition of Paintings in Water Colours was held at the Stratford Coffee House on Oxford Street, London. William Gilpin was the first president, and John and Cornelius

Varley were founders; it wasn't until the YBAs appeared in the 1990s that a British art movement had as much international recognition as British Watercolourists, and these fellows were some of its best-known exponents. The Watercolour Society was set up to rival the Royal Academy, which had turned its nose up at watercolour paintings, and in those days an exhibition

▲ David Ferry *The Midday Sun at Midnight*, 2025, digital archive print on photo-rag paper, 16½×23½in (42×59.4cm)

▼ David Ferry *The March Hares*, 2025, digital archive print on photo-rag paper, 16½×23½in (42×59.4cm)





▲ Charles Williams ***Tired Rider***, watercolour, 15×22in (38×56cm)

by the Watercolour Society attracted queues that went down Piccadilly, and later, the presidency came with a knighthood.

Sadly, it no longer attracts such rewards, although I do get to wear the most egregiously ornate, late-Victorian medal of office, designed by Herbert Von Herkomer in a failed attempt to be made president. It is faintly repulsive, to be frank, and I toy with selling it, but only to liven up council meetings. These are the instrument by which the society is run; I am supported by two vice presidents and a council of officers, each with a responsibility, none of us with any remuneration. It's the glory that counts. The president's office lasts five years and delegation is the key. All the presidents are highly skilled watercolourists who manage to continue their practice alongside the demands of the role. John Doyle, Francis Bowyer, Richard Sorrell, David Paskett, Thomas Plunkett, and Jill Leman, the first female president and the one who took us so efficiently through the recent epidemic, are all exhibiting in a variety of different styles and water-based media. John Doyle is 97 and still painting, so it can't have been too much of a strain being president.

Presidents need to have an aim, an

ambition, a mission, even if it is just a simple one; a prestigious book on the work of the society, for example, or, as Jill had, a crisis to avert. My own ambition is to widen the diversity and age-range of the RWS. Without getting too Greg Dyke about it, I think that it's a natural tendency for a society to elect a membership in its own image, and this inevitably means we get older and paler. I'd like to see more youth in the place! I'd like the RWS to give opportunities for younger artists, and not just the latest stars, to exhibit and to grow. I know that my opposite number feels the same about the RE.

By a welcome coincidence, professor David Ferry, the 13th president of the RE, lives near me; I'm in Faversham in Kent, and he in Canterbury, and we meet occasionally in Canterbury's best pub, the New Inn. This is owned by my ex-colleague and well-beloved friend Katrina Maclean, a sculptor and printmaker. We taught together at Canterbury Christ Church University when it had a Fine Art programme, and we had a great deal of fun. Canterbury is a cultural place, in its way, although always battered by the economic trade winds that rattle around its museums, galleries, universities and colleges.

David is an inspiration. His enthusiasm and originality have excited hundreds of students and pushed them into new territory they never thought they'd experience. It's certainly hard not to get carried away in conversation with him: I expect I'll be making wild spray paint stencil prints or mono-printing on 20-foot-long strips of paper soon. His long and prestigious career in art colleges and universities demonstrates this capacity amply, and I think a lot of his strength comes from a refusal to relinquish his Blackpool roots. Art for him is grotesquerie, it is comedy low and high, multi-layered gags told with an off-hand style. I wonder though how this translates to being the president of an exhibiting society. It's a very different thing.

The answer is that of course it does, and it's his experience running university departments that determines the flavour of his presidency. He's keen to widen the remit, to include new techniques, to challenge orthodoxies, and to bring the society up to

date, in the same way that he might with a new department.

David's first response to the question of what the RE is for is to quote the charity aims. It's about spreading the word: developing awareness of printmaking in the community. Talks and school visits, lectures on technique and history, to make more people aware of its potential as a means of creative expression. The aims of the RWS are more or less the same, only with watercolour. My own experience, much less associated with academia than David's, takes me to a similar position.

Being president is also a matter of dealing with artists, as a group and as individuals. Exhibiting societies are anomalous entities in the contemporary scene. Neither galleries nor beneficial associations nor university departments, the institution could be seen as a relic of a different time, before the

'David is an inspiration. His enthusiasm and originality have excited hundreds of students and pushed them into new territory they never thought they'd experience.'

commercial gallery system evolved to its present position. They were never about support. The emphasis was always on validation, and still is: you can be sure that this is the best practice available.

But what is 'best'? How do we define it? The RWS has, over the years, developed an inclusive approach to this question, and it is one I wholeheartedly support. I suppose that this is where my own experience is evident.

David's academic experience makes his apprehension of the role of the president different from mine in another way. I've been more in the 'market' than he has, I think, working without any structure around me. For me, the fact that none of this work we put into the societies is actually, directly, paid is probably less of a shock. There's something else that we both experience though, and that is the strangeness of

working only with the final product of the artists we lead. As a lecturer, you deal with work in progress, all the time: you're in people's studios, talking about what they're planning on doing with their work, what to do next, whereas as president, what you see is what emerges. It's a different thing. We just represent our members; we can't take any responsibility for their work. For David that's perhaps harder.

Whatever the case, the RE, which is the junior society (began in 1880), is thriving. Under David's leadership, its membership is widening and its approach to printmaking is focused away from the traditional, always a temptation in a society whose initial *raison d'être* was based on a particular set of technical approaches, and much more on the experimental. It is now becoming a forum for artists who take risks rather than show off accomplishments. I am all for that. ITA

▼ David Ferry *The Mari Lwyd, 2025*, digital archive print on photo-rag paper, 16½×23½in (42×59.4cm)



The Presidents' Exhibition, from June 11 to 22, is followed by a show selected from the work of the membership of both societies by art critic and art world luminary Tim Marlow, from July 31 to August 10. Find out more at banksidegallery.com

Soft transitions and small details

Amber Tyldesley reviews the new polyester canvases from **ACF Canvases**

One of my top priorities when choosing a surface is to find one that allows me to paint soft transitions and the smallest of details. That usually means something smooth, but it is often difficult to find a surface that is smooth but not 'slick'. The surface needs to have enough tooth to hold the paint without interrupting its flow.

I have been looking to find a new surface for my oil paintings and decided

to experiment with an ACF canvas. I have previously only worked on cotton and linen canvases, and ACF canvases are different being 100-per-cent polyester. After reading more about the strength and durability of this canvas it made me keen to give them a try.

I chose the 20mm deep 10×14in (25.5×35.5cm) stretched canvas and my first impressions were very positive. In fact, I've never seen a tighter canvas! I noticed that

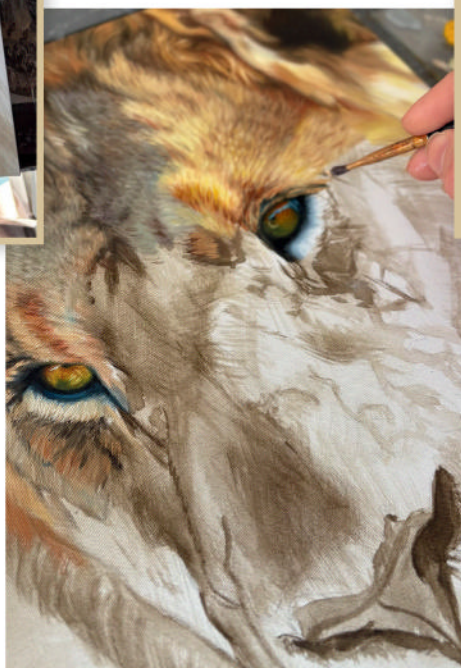
the canvas was also very 'square', which is something that is really important for my work. I often 'floater frame' my pieces, so having a perfectly symmetrical canvas with 90-degree corners is crucial for making the space between the canvas and frame even along all of the edges. The corners of the canvas were very neatly folded and fastened at the back, giving a clean and professional look.



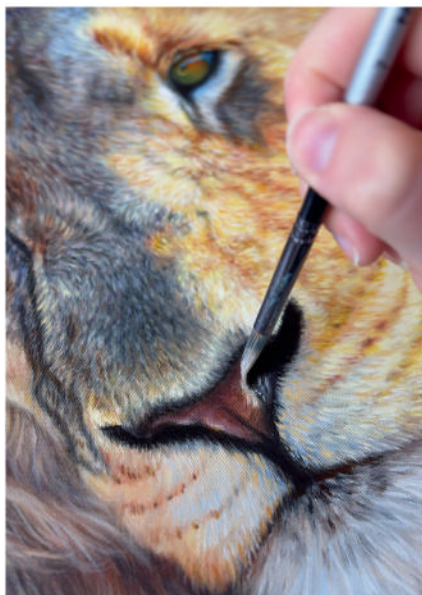
1 To build a foundation for this piece I decided to paint an acrylic underpainting. Using thinned-down raw umber paint, I looked at building the basic shapes and tones of the lion. This stage is absolutely essential as it helps me judge the values of the painting before I need to think about colour.



2 Adding a small amount of Liquin to my colours, I started to apply the first layer of oil paint with a soft synthetic angle brush. The paint adhered to the canvas effortlessly with very little pressure. When painting fur I need to include many subtle variations and colour transitions, so being able to apply the paint with a light touch is really important. I usually add an extra layer of gesso to my canvases to minimise the grain and increase paint adhesion, but this time it didn't seem necessary and I could use the canvas just as it was.



3 As I progressed what really surprised me was how well the paint adhered to the canvas. Being a fine grain, I expected the surface to feel a little 'slick' when painting the first layer, as I have found with some other fine-grain canvases I've used in the past. But this was not the case at all with the ACF canvas. I felt as though I could blend and manipulate the oil paint easily from the start. After the first layer of oils, I left the painting to dry fully. I was happy with how this layer looked but felt that I could push the contrasts a bit further with a little more work.



Amber Tyldesley


is a previous finalist in the DSWF Wildlife Artist of the Year competition and her work won the People's Choice Award and has been highly-commended by the judging panel on several occasions. Working from her studio in Warrington, Amber builds her high-impact pieces that celebrate the beauty of the natural world, using a series of layers to create a lively sense of depth, detail and luminosity. Supporting conservation efforts remains at the heart of her work, with artwork sales raising over £15,000 for projects across the UK, Africa and Asia in recent years. You can follow Amber on Instagram @Amber_Tyldesley_Art & Facebook @AmberTyldesleyArt. Original artwork and prints can be found on her website ambertyldesley.com

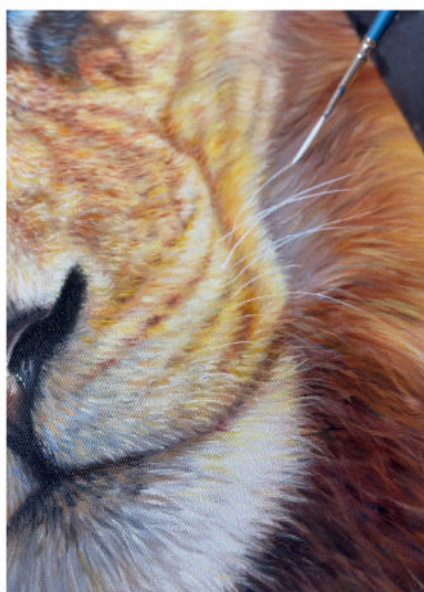
4&5 ▲▶

Once the painting was dry, I added glazes and final details. The strong lighting was a key element of this piece, so I chose to strengthen the contrast between the cool and warm tones with Winsor blue glazes to the shadows and lemon yellow to the highlights. Around the lion's eyes, nose and the mid-point of the face, I added some finer details with a round brush as this was where I wanted the focal point of the piece to be.

▶
6 Finally, it was time to hold my breath and add the whiskers. This would be a real test for the canvas as I needed to paint very precise, flowing lines. The fine grain was a real advantage here and the paint went on beautifully.

Conclusion

It can sometimes feel as though a canvas is fighting against you and what you want to achieve, but my experience with the ACF canvas was just the opposite. I felt like every mark I made went onto the surface just as I wanted it to, and it made the whole process feel very relaxed and intuitive. Finding a fine-grain surface that readily accepts the paint from the start made the process even more enjoyable, so I will certainly be using ACF canvases again for future works. 



- Amber has produced a step-by-step tutorial featuring how she painted this lion using acrylic paints. For more information go to her website ambertyldesley.com
- Amber's new collection will be showcased at the *Exhibition of Wildlife Art* at the Goredale Garden Centre, the Wirral, from July 25 to 27. Full details can be found at ewa-uk.com
- Find out more about the new range of 100-per-cent PET canvases (polyethylene terephthalate) from ACF canvases below.



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▲ **Sheep, Lanercost, Cumbria**, gouache on Arches cold-pressed paper tinted with a burnt sienna acrylic ground, 9¼×13in (25×33cm)

Summer light

Robert Brindley uses gouache to capture summer light and atmosphere and shares tips on making the right tonal and colour choices



Gouache is a versatile, opaque medium providing great covering power and the ability to correct errors very easily. The range of colours is relatively small compared to other media, but gouache colours produce vivid, clean results with a unique, beautiful, matt finish. Little equipment is needed to paint in gouache, making it light and easy to carry. Taking all this into account, together with its rapid drying time, it's the perfect medium for sketching and small *plein-air* paintings.

The Green, Scotby, Cumbria (left) is a small sketch, painted in around an hour-and-a-half, using a limited palette of three colours plus

◀ **The Green, Scotby, Cumbria**, gouache on Arches cold-pressed watercolour paper tinted with a burnt sienna wash, 7½×9¼in (19×25cm)



▲ **Sun and Shade, Borca, Italy, gouache on Arches cold-pressed watercolour paper primed with one coat of white gesso, 6×6in (15×15cm)**

white. I kept the image small, making it a perfect subject for gouache. Here are some pros and cons of using gouache. Overall, it's not difficult to use, but it does require some practice.

PROs of using gouache

- Gouache dries very quickly, and is water-soluble, non-toxic and opaque, making it perfect for a speedy execution.
- It is extremely simple to mix and use. The small tubes are easy to store and transport. They also have a relatively long shelf life, so there is minimal wastage.
- Mistakes can be corrected easily by removing pigment or overpainting.
- Gouache can be used on a variety of surfaces including paper, card, canvas and wood.

CONs of using gouache

- Initially, gouache can be challenging for the beginner, as the amount of water used in a mix at different stages needs to be carefully controlled. However, with a little practice this is quickly mastered.
- Some dark colours tend to dry lighter, while most colours dry darker.
- If applied too thickly gouache can crack, or peel over time. This can easily be avoided

by working on a rigid surface and applying only thin layers of colour.

Sun and Shade, Borca, Italy (above) is a small work, painted as a gift for our Italian friends who live in this picturesque, Italian village. It was painted in around one hour in the studio, once again using a limited palette of four colours plus white.

TEN TOP TIPS

- 1 Work from dark to light.
- 2 Be aware that the tones alter when dry. With experience you will be able to compensate for this in your mixes.
- 3 Paint the base layers first before adding the final details. If the first layer of colour isn't as opaque as required, carefully add a second coat trying not to disturb the dry paint.
- 4 Experiment by using more or less water in the mixes. Try using a weak, watery wash of acrylic paint to tint the surface of your board or paper first. This will aid unity in the finished painting and you will be able to avoid flashes of unpainted, white paper which can be a distraction.
- 5 Lighten the paint using white instead of diluting the mix. Using white will ensure opacity; however, be aware that it may reduce the intensity of the colour.
- 6 Colours can be reactivated, or removed from the paper by the gentle use of a clean, moist brush.
- 7 Rehydrate any dried-out colours on the palette by rewetting or spraying.
- 8 Try working with a limited palette of colours. Mixing becomes simpler and colour mixes are less likely to be lifeless, dull or 'muddy'.
- 9 Ensure that the underlying colours are thoroughly dry before overlaying.
- 10 Clean your brushes thoroughly between colour mixes to avoid muddy colours.

BASIC MATERIALS

The materials needed are relatively few and reasonably inexpensive. The following list may help those new to the medium in their selection.

- **Paint** There are many brands of gouache paint available, however, I would recommend using a well-known, reliable brand such as Winsor & Newton or Daler-Rowney. Start out with a small number of primary colours, plus white, which will allow you to mix a fairly wide range of mixes. (For my step-by-step demonstration in this article, I used a set of four primary colours and white.)
- **Brushes** I use the same brushes as I do for watercolour, with the addition of a couple of less expensive flats and rounds, consisting of: a Pro Arte Series 203 rigger size 2; two Pro Arte Series 203 rounds, sizes 5 and 3; a Rosemary & Co flat series 274, size 4; two unbranded, inexpensive synthetic rounds, sizes 8 and 12; and an inexpensive synthetic 5/8in flat by Royal & Langnickel.
- **Paper / Surfaces** Gouache works well on any reasonable quality watercolour paper providing it is at least 140lb (300gsm) weight. A good quality card, or scraps of mountboard, can also be used. I always prime both sides of card with a coat of acrylic white primer.
- **Palettes / Mixing trays** I use ceramic mixing palettes as I find them far superior to plastic. If you don't want to buy palettes, then old plates work very well.



▲ **View to the Lakeland Fells**, gouache on an Arches block of 140lb (300gsm) cold-pressed paper, 4¾×13¾in (12×35cm)

Capturing summer light

Gouache is the perfect medium for capturing the effects of summer light. The pure, vivid colours enable you to reproduce the vibrant, warm light and

cool shadows observed in many sun-bathed landscapes. For all paintings there are a few vital considerations to be made before making a start: light, tone, colour and composition – the essential ingredients that hold any painting together.

In this article I will focus on light, tone and colour; the three vital components for painting summer light. It's important to understand the differences between these three elements and how they combine to create a successful painting.

The small painting, *View to the Lakeland Fells* (above) has all three essential elements: light, tone and colour. Although the colour is not intense, the sketch illustrates how these three elements combine to produce an atmospheric, well-balanced painting.

Bright light influences every element on a summer's day, including the warm colours in the light and the cooler colours in the distance, especially in the shadows. Remember that even the most successful paintings can't compete with nature and the real thing. The only way an artist can compete is to interpret these light effects as closely as possible, creating paintings that capture harmony, tone and colour. The variety of light present in all of the seasons provides excitement, mood, atmosphere and emotion. A constant summer light, however, provides the artist with fewer options, dealing mainly with brighter, more obvious light effects.

One of the more difficult aspects of painting *en plein air* in the summer is the ever-changing light effects that come and go constantly. With experience you accept this and gradually your ability to observe these effects and make quick decisions becomes automatic. The variety of light in a chosen subject often creates mood, atmosphere and recession. The direction of light is also an important factor for you to consider, as side lighting, low lighting, or back lighting can be used creatively to ensure good design and composition.



▲ **Wild Flower Garden**, gouache on Arches cold-pressed paper tinted with a burnt sienna acrylic ground to enhance the warmth in the subject, 9¾×11¾in (25×30cm). A limited palette of colours was used to produce the bright light on a summer's day. These were: primary blue; ultramarine blue; primary red; alizarin crimson; primary yellow; and white. The colour mixes were relatively easy to mix and are generally clean and bright. The full tonal range provides a wonderful sharp contrast and feeling of light.


Different lighting conditions will offer you different challenges. Morning and evening light, for example, often presents the most rewarding opportunities, as the low light encountered early and late in the day creates strong shadows, ensuring good design in your paintings. Long shadows can be used creatively by allowing them to lead you in to the focal point. *Contre-jour* lighting on the other hand is dramatic and always seduces artists. If successfully executed, when combined with a simplified silhouette, it can result in stunning, atmospheric paintings.

Tone and colour

Tone, in painting terms, simply means how dark or light a colour is. By understanding

this, we can then consider colour or hue. Tone is probably the most important element in any painting, perhaps even more than colour? The use of correct tonal values is essential; if the tonal sequence is wrong, then the painting will not work. Colour, however, is a more personal thing and providing that the chosen colour palette is harmonious and colours used aren't too discordant, the painting will succeed. When considering the ability to capture light in summer landscapes, which is probably easier to achieve than any other lighting condition, the effective use of colour is essential. The colour mixes needed to capture overcast or misty days, or the subtle greys of the winter landscapes are far more difficult for

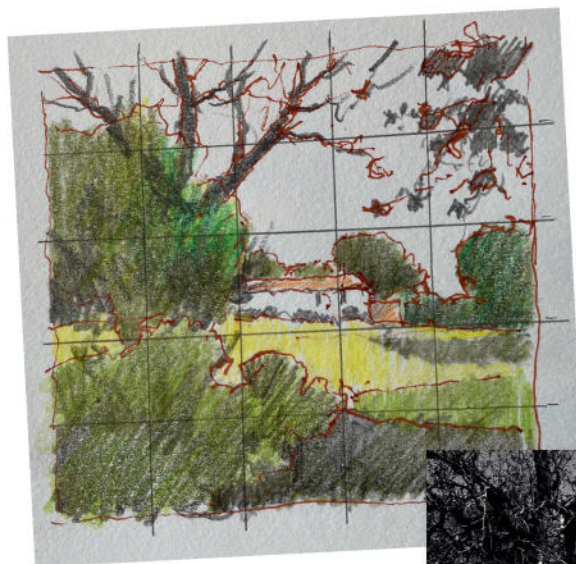
the inexperienced painter to handle. To capture the variety and subtlety of such subject matter successfully requires a thorough understanding of colour theory and also an experienced hand.

Tone and colour should be considered separately, as the intensity and visual impact of some colours overwhelm us, and subsequently it isn't easy to assess their tone. Tone is relative, so how dark or light a tone is often depends on what it's surrounded by. On a bright, summer's day, a simple painting can be made using as little as three tones – a dark, medium and a light. The Notan, or similar App, discussed below can be used to isolate the three-tone relationship. 

DEMONSTRATION Rape Field, Eden Valley, Cumbria

REFERENCE PHOTO

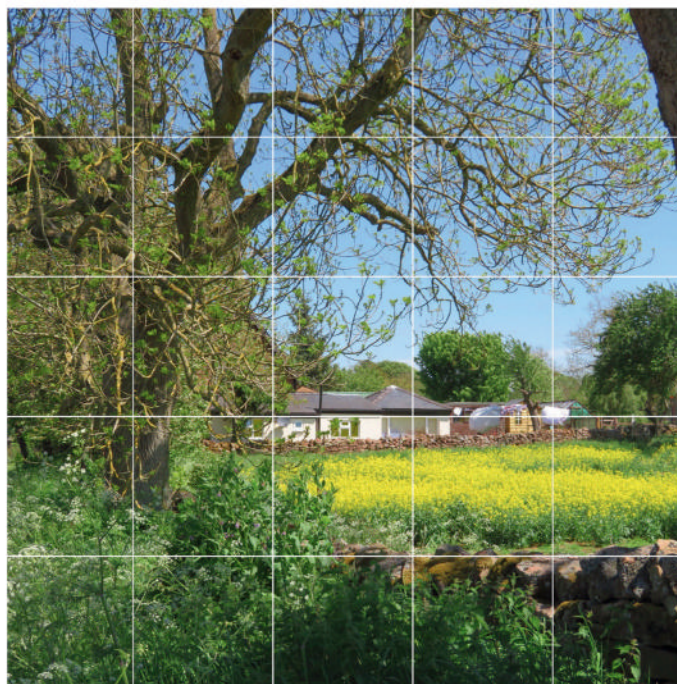
This simple subject was specifically chosen for the demonstration. Its simplicity allowed me to discuss the following: the use of a limited palette; a sketch; a Notan for tonal reference; and four easy-to-follow steps. The subject depicts warm light illuminating the rape field and distant landscape, framed by far cooler colour combinations present in the foreground and the large tree on the left-hand side. Making a small sketch, I decided to keep the process really simple by painting blocks of colour with limited colour variation and little detail.



PREPARATION

I drew out a quick, simplified sketch using a sepia ink pen, together with a small selection of coloured pencils. This enabled me to settle on the final positioning of the various elements and gave me a rough idea for the colour and tonal distribution.

I occasionally use an App call Notan, (right) which is an extremely useful tool for helping to identify the tonal distribution of the image. The App is free, very easy to use and can convert any image to black and white, or any combinations of tones from three upwards.

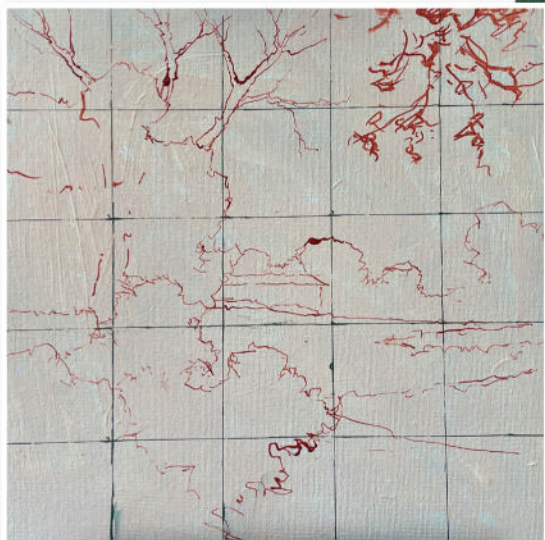


MATERIALS

● **Surface** The back of an off-cut of mountboard treated with one coat of white acrylic primer each side to prevent warping.

● **Winsor & Newton gouache** For this demonstration I used a limited palette of the following colours: primary yellow; primary red; primary blue; ultramarine blue; and permanent white.



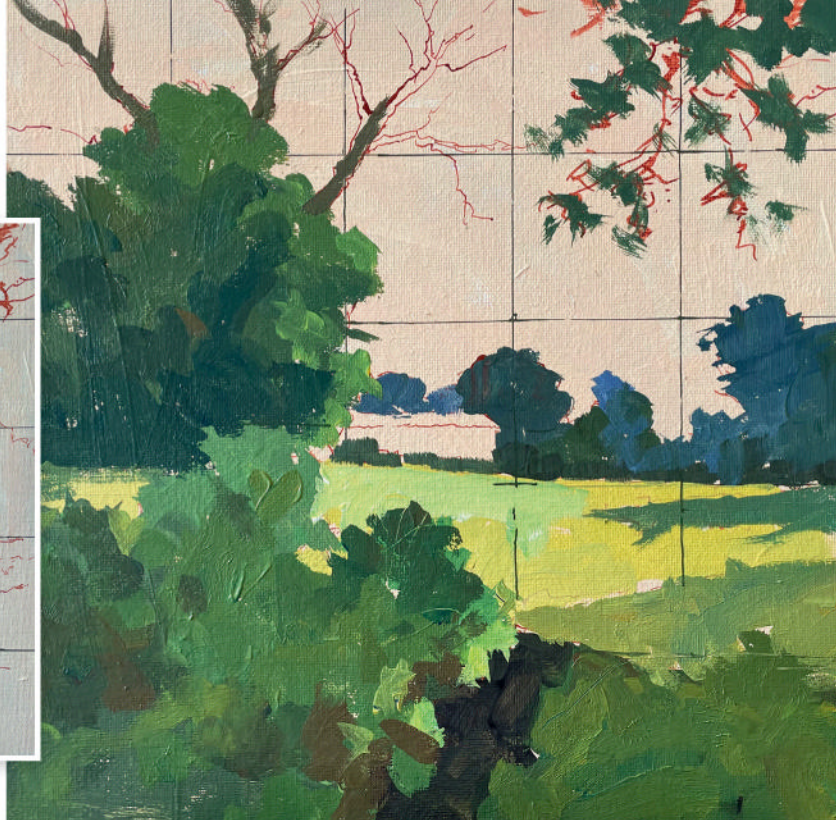


▲ STAGE ONE

I used a waterproof sepia fine pen to draw out the basic outline of the subject.

APPLICATION TIP

When overlaying colour, try not to disturb the previous layer. A light touch is essential. Practise on a scrap of paper before you start on the painting.



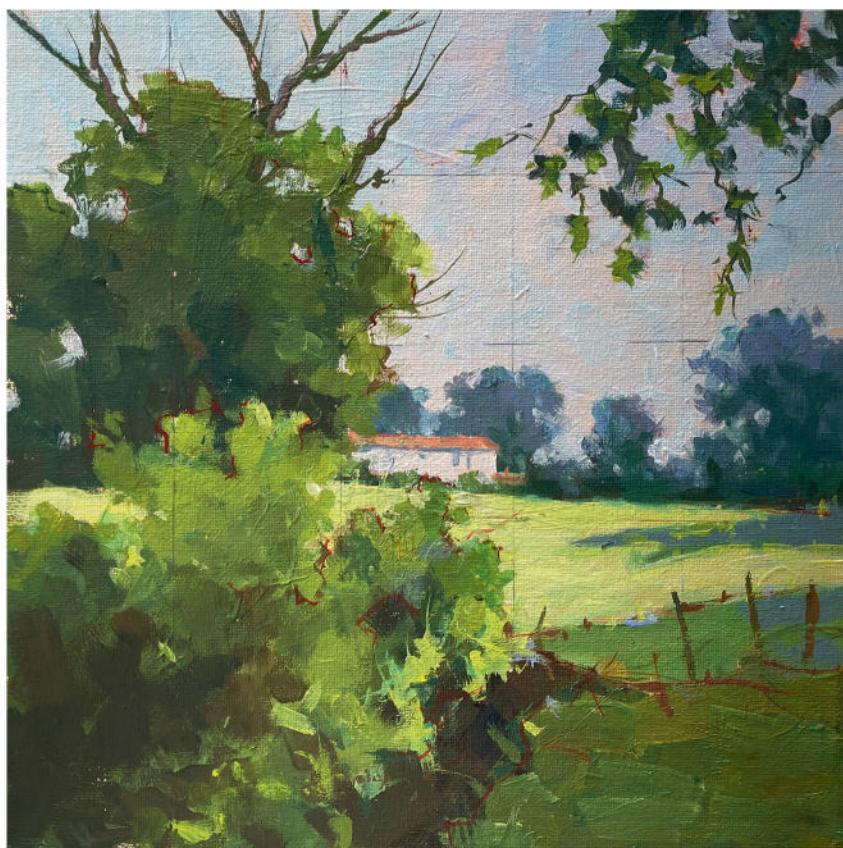
▲ STAGE TWO

Using all of the colours available I mixed the following combinations for the different areas:

Distant trees Primary blue, a touch of primary yellow, and white was used for the lighter trees. A mix of ultramarine blue, a little more primary yellow, and less white was used for the darker, warmer trees. I intentionally added more blue in these mixes to increase the sense of recession in the distance.

Foreground trees and bushes I made several combinations of primary blue, primary yellow and white, some with more yellow and some with more blue, and I varied the amounts of white. The darker areas were painted using ultramarine blue, a touch of primary yellow and red, plus a touch of white.

Fields These were painted using predominantly primary yellow plus white and varying touches of primary blue.



◀ STAGE THREE

To paint the sky and to refine the block-in, I used the following colour mixes:

Sky Primary blue, a very small touch of primary red, and white for the blue sky areas; and white with a very small touch of both primary red and primary yellow for the lighter areas.

Distant trees These were subtle mixes of primary blue, primary red and white, which produced a pale purple that was used to adjust the tone and colour to enhance the recession.

The foreground foliage and trees Subtlety was achieved by adding a variety of mixes of primary blue, primary yellow, primary red and white. The colour temperature was adjusted by the amount of blue and yellow used in each mix. The lighter areas generally had more white and yellow in the mixes. The branches were mixes of ultramarine blue, small touches of primary red, primary yellow and white.

Cottage The roof was painted using primary red, primary yellow and white.

The wall This was predominantly white, with touches of primary red and primary yellow.



▲ FINISHED PAINTING

Rape Field, Eden Valley, Cumbria, gouache on mountboard treated with one coat of white acrylic primer, 6X6in (15X15cm).

For the final step I used the mixes from the previous stage, overlaying and blending the colours slightly to achieve a softer rendition. Details such as the windows, fence posts and so on were added using some of the suitable tones available from mixes on the palette.

► FINAL ASSESSMENT

In some instances you may want to evaluate your finished work, especially concerning your use of tonal values. You can easily do this by converting your image to black and white using any readily available software. Look carefully at edges and also compare one tone against another. If there are any weaknesses you will be able to go back and make suitable adjustments.



Robert Brindley

is a member of the Royal Society of Marine Artists and currently the archivist for the society. He is the author of three books, and four DVDs have been produced by Town House Films. For more information see robertbrindley.com



In the footsteps of Tunnickliffe



Becky Thorley-Fox SWLA

is a landscape and wildlife painter specialising in oils. She carries a lightweight palette and easel out into the landscape along with a telescope to capture wildlife *en plein air*. Originally from Cheshire, she moved to the west coast of mid-Wales where she finds an endless source of inspiration. Becky is a member of the Society of Wildlife Artists; her work can be seen in the annual exhibition The Natural Eye at the Mall Galleries in London each autumn. Becky has an online gallery showcasing her latest work beckythorley-fox.co.uk

'A special thank you to the Erik Hosking Trust for helping to fund the upgrade of my field scope to a larger Swarovski field scope. This new scope has opened up a new world of painting opportunities that were previously out of reach!'

PROJECT INSPIRATION

Inspired by Charles Tunnickliffe's winter and summer diaries, I have made trips up to Anglesey to visit some of the artist's regular and favourite painting haunts, studying the wildlife throughout the year and seeing how it compares with Tunnickliffe's time.

Oriel Ynys Mon owns Tunnickliffe's private collection and showcases his work throughout the year in a permanent gallery space. The collection consists of over 1,000 artworks. I've loved studying Tunnickliffe's paintings and sketchbooks. He had a wonderful eye and feel for the behaviour of light and colour in nature and for compositional design, something I continue to focus on in my work.

Becky Thorley-Fox continues her three-part series painting *plein-air* through the seasons inspired by the artist and illustrator, Charles Tunnickliffe – this time focusing on wildlife on Anglesey

This month I will be turning my attention from the small birds in spring to larger works. I've especially enjoyed exploring along the Menai Strait, a beautiful expanse of water set against the backdrop of the mountain ranges of Snowdonia. There is always wildlife to spot. I saw a group of Great Crested Grebes one morning far across the water on the other side, but luckily there were a pair of noisy Sandwich Terns closer by!

This pair of Sandwich Terns (right) stood with their wings held low and their necks stretched tall as they chattered away to one another, their courtship calls carrying across the water. Their striking white and pale angular forms contrasted with the

hazy softly lit spring morning. I grabbed my biggest panel, 18x24in, and quickly placed the Terns – facing into the space they filled with their sounds.

When working on a larger scale I use bigger brushes and work fast to cover the canvas with the key elements. These can always be further embellished at a later stage. I take a few reference photos that will serve to jog my memory later in the studio. I would like to have caught more of the colour and texture in the water but I ran out of time before the light and water surface changed completely due to the rising tide and developing weather. I was pleased, however, to have sketched in the courting Sandwich Terns and the colour and texture of the buoy before it moved.



I needed to capture the Sandwich Terns quickly before they fled, the light changed and the tide rose



▲ First stages of the painting

Back in the studio I refined my first impression, with the help of reference photos and my memory of the morning. The Menai is tidal and so things were changing fast on the water but I managed to catch the conditions that most inspired me: that glassy reflection, foreground ripples and background texture from a light wind disturbing the surface of the water. I kept the brushwork light and loose as the spring morning had a wonderful soft glowing airiness to it that I wanted to convey.

This Little Egret (over the page) was painted at Cemlyn later in the year in the north of Anglesey. This area is a magical wildlife haven, even after the summer Tern colonies have left. In this scene the light on the Egret caught my eye; its white

BECKY'S MATERIALS

- **Support** Belle Arti and Claessens oil-primed linen cut and glued to 3.6mm ply board
- **Michael Harding oils** Cadmium yellow light; cadmium yellow; cadmium yellow deep; cadmium orange; naphthol red; alizarin claret; ultramarine blue; phthalo blue; raw umber; transparent oxide red; yellow ochre; and titanium white. I recently expanded the yellows in my palette in order to increase my mixing range and capabilities for capturing light effects and I haven't looked back!
- **Brushes** Mainly synthetic ivory brushes for drawing and detailed work and hog filberts for larger areas as they are more robust for withstanding rigorous brushwork

'Their striking white and pale angular forms contrasted with the hazy softly-lit spring morning.'

▼ ***Sandwich Terns on a Spring Morning***, oil on linen, 18×24in (46×61cm)



▲ Close-up of the sunlit Sandwich Terns



▲ The light on the Egret caught my eye

plumage glowed blue in the shadow areas complementing the oranges in the foliage. The Egret was walking back and forth, hunting along the water's edge, affording me the opportunity to study and capture its form.

Working at speed

I began working quickly with a loose block-in. The panel I used was quite large, 12×18in, and I was working against the changing light and a rapidly rising tide that would soon fill



▲ First stages of the Little Egret

this pool. I established an overall tone for the water, the light and dark shapes of the foliage and the form of the Little Egret. The foliage created a leading line up to the Egret, my focal point, which I placed a third of the way into the canvas, following the 'rule of thirds' for composition design.

I spent a further two sessions on this piece; the first in the studio, referring to my photographs and memory of the moment. I worked until I could no longer summon or decipher any further visual information

that could feed this painting. I decided to try taking it out a second time. The light was weaker than the previous day and the tide just low enough to reveal some of the foliage that I wanted to refer to for creating more texture in the painting. I was happy to keep background elements loose and suggestive, since it was the glowing form of the Little Egret catching the soft light that was my focal point.

A few days later I set off along Newborough Warren path with the



▲ *Little Egret at Cemlyn*, oil on linen, 12×18in (30.5×46cm)



▲ First stages of the Stonechats

intention of getting to the island, Ynys Llanddwyn, but I stopped in my tracks to paint this little scene (above and right). What caught my eye was the soft white clouds sitting on blue mountains, the emerald glowing sea and a pair of Stonechats chirping away on the tops of the shrubs and trees in front of me. I quickly got to work, painting in the background as it was the part of the scene most likely to change first. I also prefer to start with the elements that are farthest away where possible, so that I can increase the value, chroma and viscosity of paint as I work forwards. I made a quick sketch of where the tree and gorse bushes sat in my painting. The Stonechat pair didn't seem to be going anywhere and were attracting much attention from passers-by along the footpath with their singing and flitting from posts to tree tops. I painted the female faintly on a background tree. Her plumage

BECKY'S TOP TIPS

- It can be a challenge capturing the changing light, a moving tide and fleeting wildlife within a scene. Keep a clear vision in mind and retain the key colour and value relationships as you continue to work the painting.
- Start small and work *alla prima*, within a timeframe for consistent light conditions and to finish the piece in one session.
- Be open to the day, and to the unexpected painting opportunities that will occur as these usually are the most inspiring!



▲ **Stonechat on the Treetop**, oil on linen, 9×13in (23×33cm)

was brown and camouflaged unlike the male with his bright orange body, white collar and black head. I placed the male Stonechat on the top of the tree as the focal point with the high contrast cloud and blue hills immediately behind him drawing the eye in. There was also a faint sparkle of light on the sea adding further contrast in my focal area. 



Close-up of Stonechat



● **Plein Air Through the Seasons – in the Footsteps of Tunnickliffe** is a solo exhibition of work by Becky Thorley-Fox, comprising four collections of paintings representing spring, summer, autumn and winter, inspired by the Ladybird *What to Look For* series, illustrated by C. Tunnickliffe. Becky writes: 'I have strived to capture wildlife in the landscape, enjoying the seasonal highlights of flora and fauna throughout the year.' The exhibition can be seen at Oriel Ynys Mon, Anglesey until October 12. For more information visit orielmon.org

Watercolour freed!



Catherine Beale

specialises in watercolour techniques across a number of surfaces and paints landscapes and portrait commissions from her hillside studio on the edge of Bath. Her first book, *Capturing Light – Creating Radiant Landscapes in Watercolour* was published in May 2023 by Search Press as part of their *Innovative Artists* series. Catherine is a member of the Society of Women Artists and teaches at the Royal West of England Drawing School, Cornwall School of Art, Chapel Cottage Studios and art societies across England and Wales. Her current solo exhibition is at the Royal United Hospital in Bath. Keep in touch @catherinebealeart via Instagram and Facebook or view her paintings on her website catherinebeale.com

In the second of six articles on unlocking the potential of watercolour, **Catherine Beale** explores the effects of capillary action

This series of articles is all about encouraging painters to think differently about the medium and 'supercharge' their watercolours by embracing abstract behaviours. Step away from your brush! Abandon the hairdryer! Be brave! Trust the movement of water and use the power of suggestion to force viewers to 'lean in' closer.

This second article further explores the idea of using subtle drip marks to form atmospheric structures in paintings, which we saw in last month's edition. Paint drips can be encouraged into wonderful 'blooms' that resemble distant tree canopies. Wet paint is sucked into neighbouring damp surfaces by capillary action to create marks that are impossible to make with a brush.

DEMONSTRATION *Dreaming Ridgeways*



REFERENCE PHOTO

My photo depicts a series of retreating ridges lined with trees in a succession of flat and diagonal horizons retreating up the page and into the distance. I cropped the sky to narrow the space dramatically between the horizon and the top of the painting.

► STAGE ONE

I began with the sky, and then dropped the first ridge into it as it dried. This encouraged the first ridgeway to bloom naturally into tree shapes. I propped my painting up at the top to tilt it towards me, then wetting my large flat brush, I applied it to the sky area down to the first horizon, turning my head so that I could see the shine all across the paper to avoid dry gaps forming. I then loaded diluted phthalo turquoise onto the brush and, starting off the page, I stroked on a couple of horizontal lines using minimum pressure. (More paint will drop onto the surface where the brush first touches so starting off the page prevents 'blobs' forming.) I applied less and less paint moving down the wet area so that it faded before it reached the dry edge and the paint petered out. I quickly added a little indigo and permanent rose to the turquoise using the same horizontal strokes. The diluted colours softly merged.

MATERIALS

- **Support** Daler-Rowney A4 watercolour Aquafine artboard supported by a wooden board. This prevents buckling and allows the paint to run evenly across the surface.
- **Artists' quality tubed watercolours** from Daler-Rowney and Winsor & Newton: Phthalo blue; phthalo turquoise; indigo; permanent sap green; permanent rose; and raw sienna
- **Brushes** Three watercolour brushes – 1in flat; a smaller flat; and a rigger
- **Extras** Kitchen roll; table salt; and palette with deep wells



Note

Before painting I prepare my palette so that I can access every hue in two very different concentrations and tones – tubed and diluted. I squeeze a pea-sized blob of each colour into the edge of separate large well. I then pull about half of each blob out with my wetted large, flat brush, releasing the water from it by pressing down, to form concentrated (the consistency of single cream) lakes of colour around islands of thick paint, washing my brush between each colour.

STAGE TWO

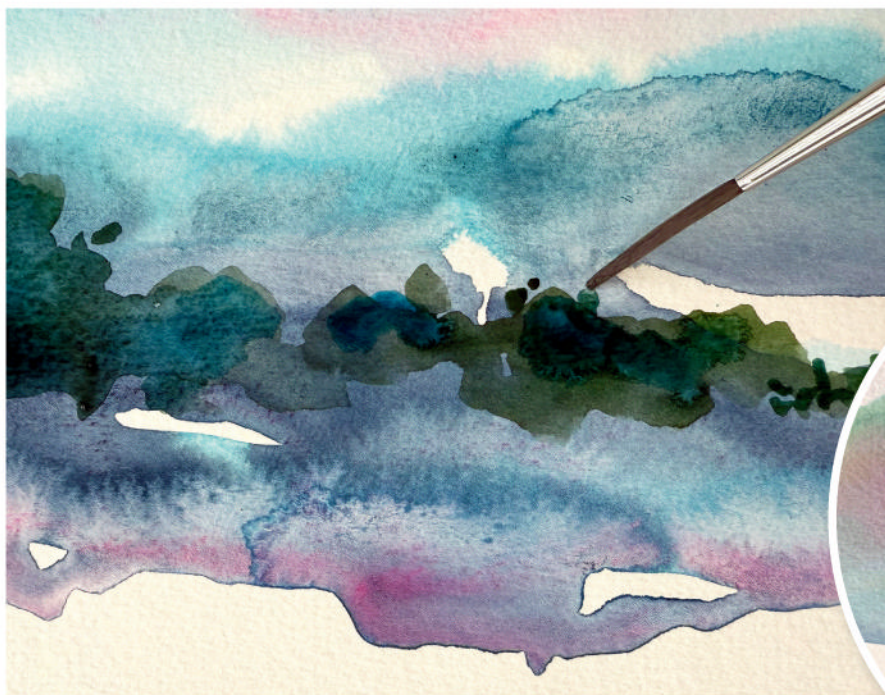
I allowed the wash of sky to begin to dry until I could see the cold press bumps of the paper showing. You can see this point when it resembles the old-fashioned, rippled safety glass that you used to see in reinforced glass doors. It was then time to create the line of trees on the top horizon using capillary action as new, wet paint would be pulled up the paper into the drying sky to create the first ridge.

I applied wet paint with the brush at the edge of the drying sky. The bottom of this new area had a sharp edge against the dry paper below. However, the top area reached into the drying paint resembling trees. I added a few more colours to tint the paint area.



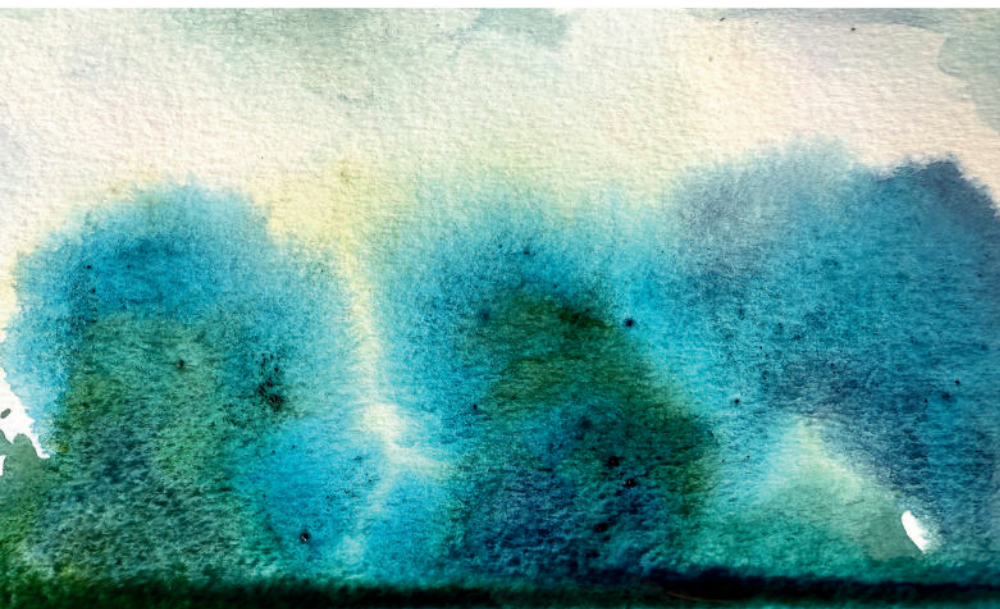
◄ STAGE THREE

I loaded my large flat brush with thick indigo and created a further ridge below this one, clipping the wet paint on the left-hand side so the ridges merged here. The gap of dry white paper below was left to represent mist and I moved on quickly, leaving the edge to be edited later. I added sap green and more of the inky indigo to increase the paint density (as watercolours tend to dry lighter and this is how I guard against this loss of tone). I swiftly dropped colour in allowing watermarks to develop to resemble different thicknesses of trees growing from the ridgeway.



◀ STAGE FOUR

I used a wet rigger brush to refine the upper edges of the tree shapes while they were still wet to ensure they merged.



▲ STAGE FIVE

I wetted my clean flat brush and turned it to 'wash' the bottom, hard edge of the ridge lightly. Removing some paint softened this edge to suggest billowing mist rising irregularly up the slope. The artboard can take gentle washing with a wet brush. Avoid drying or cleaning the brush on kitchen paper towel as you will be about to use the paint mix left on the brush.

◀ STAGE SIX

The wet colour on the brush was the perfect mix of hues to bring down to the bottom of the painting. I dragged it down and, once again, allowed it to dry partially as before, waiting for the surface bumps of the paper to show through. I left white paper to suggest gaps in the tree forms and to create maximum tonal difference to draw attention.



◀ STAGE SEVEN

By this stage the capillary trees were in the 'safety glass' phase or slightly drier. I knew that any wet paint added to them would create 'cauliflower' paint blooms. I added thick indigo and turquoise to puddle and finally sap green (which was thicker) and the colours clashed together suggesting tree forms within the paint puddle.



Next edition, Catherine will be exploring how to pour paint and embrace the drips!

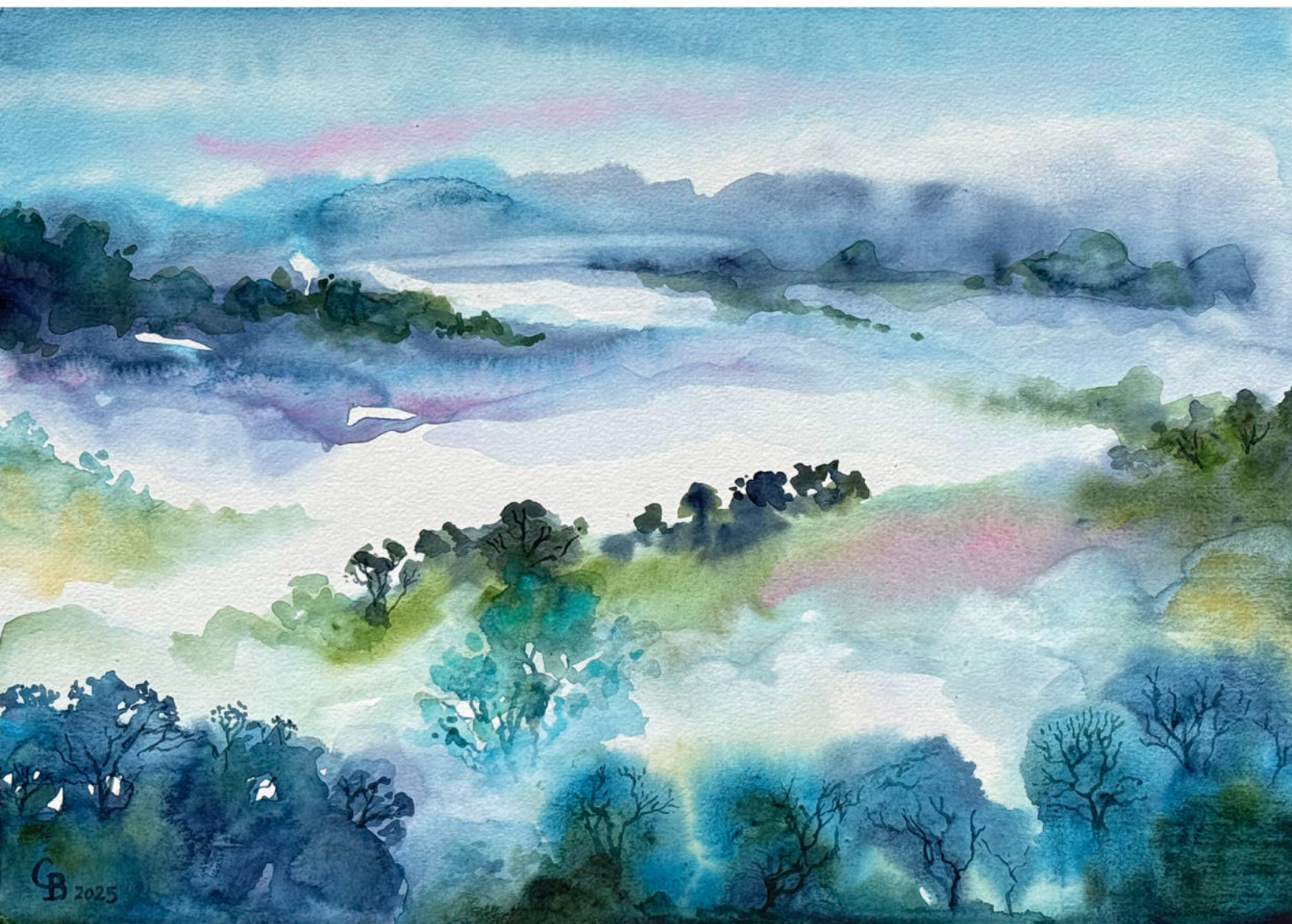
▲ ► STAGE EIGHT

I weighed the page down with a paperweight and left the trees to dry partially while I added a little more detail with my rigger brush. The delicate point of this brush is perfect for dragging out marks from drips, suggesting fringed tree tops and adding branches to the foreground. The drips lay on top of the watermark tree canopies giving them structure. I added a large, new tree specimen to the foreground to bridge the two ridges and add interest. I used kitchen paper towel to dab lightly at the upper treetops to remove paint and to lighten tone as desired.

▼ FINISHED PAINTING

Dreaming Ridgeways, watercolour on Artboard, 8¼×11¾in (21×30cm)

I left the painting weighed down and stepped back to take a 'helicopter view' of my painting. The washes appeared sufficiently illuminated and so I didn't have to remove any paint to lighten them. I decided to soften some edges a little more to add atmosphere.



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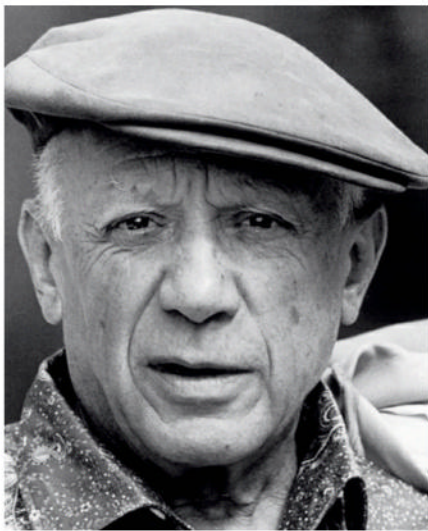


Sarah Edmonds

is the marketing manager for Pegasus Art, a freelance art marketing consultant and a watercolour painter. Sarah studied a short course at the Slade School of Fine Art followed by a degree in marketing and has worked in the industry ever since.

sarahedmonds-marketing.com

In her history of art series, Sarah Edmonds shines a light on lesser-known artworks by artists we know and love. This month she explores the work of **Pablo Picasso**



Pablo Picasso, 1969

Picasso

and his animals

The bond between man and beast

What can I tell you about Pablo Picasso that hasn't already been told? Born in Malaga in 1881, no other artist has had so much influence on the fabric of the 20th century as he. One of the most ambitious, anarchic and prolific artists, he saw great success in his own lifetime. He catalogued, archived and curated his own collections, controlled his image and protected his legacy. Married twice, with four children by three different women, he was a potent, red-blooded lover who pursued women with a passion and who played an integral part of his creativity, appearing on canvas upon canvas.

What you may not know, however, is that he absolutely loved animals and had a great affinity with them. Whatever was going on in his life, whichever woman was by his side or not, he always had an animal close by. They featured heavily in his paintings and his life. His love for animals was sometimes said to be even greater than his love for humans: 'Pablo loved to surround himself with animals. In general, they were exempt from the distrust with which he regarded his human friends,' said his partner Françoise Gilot.

The son of a pigeon breeder and an aficionado of bullfighting, Picasso had an eye trained for capturing an animal's

movement, shape, and personality – often with just a single line. From paintings, prints, lithographs, aquatints and ceramics, there are no boundaries to his creativity in depicting animals.

Bulls and minotaurs

The subject of bullfighting runs through almost the entire oeuvre of Pablo Picasso. It was his father, José Ruiz y Blasco, who introduced his son to the world of bullfighting. The bull in Picasso's work symbolised fertility and power, but it could also be interpreted as a commentary on social and political conditions. The bull often appears in his work alongside the horse, entangled and fighting, both beautiful and dangerous. Picasso is said to have equated this push-pull with the relationship between man and woman. The bullfight is a subject not tackled by many other artists. Goya was one of the few and inspired Picasso with his realistic and often gruesome drawings and sketches. The minotaur represents Picasso's alter ego, half man-half bull with an intellectual existence, yet not always in control of his sexual desires. The minotaur ties into his broader exploration of Classicism that persisted in his work for many years.

'Picasso may like or detest men, but he adores all animals. At the Bateau-Lavoir he had three Siamese cats, a dog, a monkey and a turtle, and a domesticated white mouse who made its home in a drawer in his table. In Vallauris he had a goat, in Cannes he had a monkey. And as for dogs, there has not been a day in his life when he has been without their companionship. If it had depended only on himself, he would always have lived in the midst of a veritable Noah's Ark.'

Picasso in conversation with Brassai, Paris, November 26, 1946



Pablo Picasso **Guernica** – Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, January 2010.

Photo: Pedro Belleza

Pigeons

His fascination for birds started early. His father was a pigeon breeder and had a dovecote in most of his childhood homes. He taught drawing at the Instituto da Guarda in La Coruna and little 'Pablito' joined his classes drawing bird after bird. He had a natural affinity with birds from the beginning, capturing their characteristics with alarming precision. In 1895 his sister Conchita died which was a turning point in his life. He had promised to stop painting if she survived and thus the dye was cast and the desire for a life as a painter became more profound. He continued to keep birds himself in many of his homes. His artist friend Brassai gave him a white pigeon, which kept him company while he worked, often perching on his head.

Doves

In 1937, Picasso moved into an attic studio in Paris with its own aviary. He had pigeons, canaries and exotic birds. A decade later Henri Matisse gifted him a white pigeon, which he used as a study for a lithograph. The white bird on a black background caught the eye of the poet Louis Aragon, a member of the French Communist Party, who reminded him he had promised to paint a poster for the World Peace Congress. He designed posters for many years and among these motifs is his most famous version, the *Peace Dove*, drawn with only a few lines, holding an olive branch in its beak, from 1961. Doves appeared as early as 1901, when he painted *Child with a Dove* in his Blue Period – he was just 20 years old, and his best friend Carlos had just died. When Picasso's daughter was born, he decided to call her Paloma, meaning 'dove' in Spanish.

Owls

Owls feature again and again in Picasso's work, often in ceramics, as a symbol of wisdom and feeding his fascination for the supernatural and ancient tales. While Pablo was still working at the Musée d'Antibes in 1946, the photographer Michel Sima had come to us one day with a little owl he had found in a corner of the museum. One of his claws had been injured. 'We bandaged it and it gradually healed,' explains Francoise Gilot. Picasso kept the baby owl with him in his studio and nursed it back to health.

Dogs

When Marguerite Matisse visited Picasso at the commune of Bateau-Lavoir in Montmartre in 1906, accompanying her father as a 12-year-old girl, she doesn't recall anything in Picasso's studio, but instead his enormous Saint Bernard dog. In the case



Pablo Picasso **Acrobats Family with a Monkey**, 1905, mixed media, 41×29½in (104×75cm).



◀ Pablo Picasso **Boy Leading a Horse**, 1905-1906, oil on canvas, 86¼×51¾in (220.5×131cm).

Horses

Some of Picasso's most valuable works were made during the Rose Period including *Boy Leading a Horse* which became his largest study for *The Watering Place*, painted in 1905. *Boy Leading a Horse* depicts a nude, unmounted figure leading a horse – it's a peaceful painting of true simplicity. The horse has no reins, and the boy's clenched fist is used to instruct the horse to move forward.

Famously, a silently screaming horse takes centre stage in his epic, pacifist artwork *Guernica* whilst horses appear throughout his entire oeuvre symbolising strength, freedom, desire and prudence.

Fifty-two years since the death of Picasso aged 91 on April 8, 1973 we are still beguiled by this prolific, bold and single-minded character. Not a day went by without an animal companion by his side.

TA



● See **Picasso: The Three Dancers** at Tate Modern from September 25 until Spring 2026. Find out more at tate.org.uk

● Studio members can watch an exclusive bonus video by Sarah to accompany this feature within their Studio Video area at painters-online.co.uk

The video includes information about the art materials used by the Masters, filmed at Pegasus Art shop.

of Picasso, dogs really were a man's best friend; they did not let him down where humans could.

Picasso and Lump

Lump was introduced to Picasso in April 1957 at La Californie, his hillside mansion in Cannes. The photographer David Douglas Duncan had taken portraits of Picasso and brought his faithful Dachshund with him. Picasso famously painted the dog on a dinner plate and presented it to Duncan as a gift. Man and beast struck up such a connection that Lump was left to live at La Californie for the next six years in happy company with his boxer dog, Yan and his goat named Esmeralda. According to Douglas Duncan, 'This was a love affair. Picasso would take Lump in his arms and feed him from his hand. Hell, that little dog just took over. He ran the damn house.'

Monkeys

Of course, Picasso kept a pet capuchin monkey. Her name was Monina and she lived with the artist and his first partner Fernande Olivier. Monkeys feature in his collage sculptures made from toys and found objects. They also feature in his early work from the Rose Period, when he lived alongside and closely observed the Cirque Medrano in Montmartre.

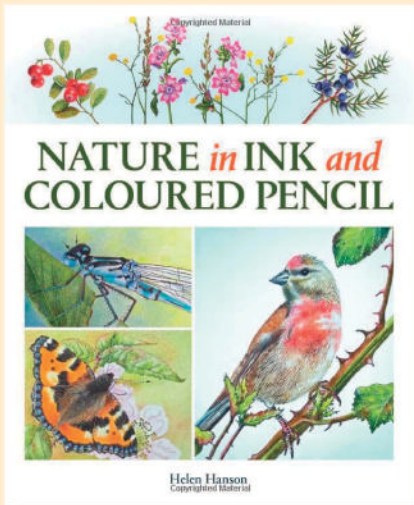
In the 1905 painting *Family of Acrobats with Monkey* Picasso captures an intimate moment in a family of circus performers. He was on the cusp of moving out of his Blue Period, painting the underdogs and impoverished, choosing warmer hues and more romantic subjects. The pyramidal composition has been likened to a Renaissance Mother and Child configuration and shows the monkey as a member of the family group.



Francoise Gilot and Picasso, 1952

ART BOOKS

Reviewed by Henry Malt



Nature in Ink and Coloured Pencil

Helen Hanson

Books on drawing and painting nature abound and choosing one comes down to personal preference and whether they offer something useful or different. Helen Hanson, whose previous offering dealt with landscape, provides plenty of variety and depth combined with a high level of accessibility, which you might consider to be a winning combination. The media she uses allow for precise work, so we're looking at a good degree of representation rather than colour – and shape-based interpretation. For all that, the level of detail is not obsessive and it is this, combined with some very thorough explanations that make the book so easy and pleasant to follow.

The cover image gives you a fair idea of what to expect – birds, insects and vegetation for the most part, with a few animals to complete the picture. Images are, as you might expect, mostly close-up and are arranged by the type of habitat.

Crowood £20, 160 pages (PB), ISBN 9780719844850

Buy it!

For a comprehensible but accessible guide to a popular subject

David Hockney – a Graphic Novel

Monica Foggia & Giovanni Gastaldi

Your esteemed editor and I had a bit of a discussion about this. 'It might be interesting', said Jane. 'It could be a lot of fun', was my feeling. I think this would be roughly your approach if you saw it in a bookshop, too. And, yes, you would be right.

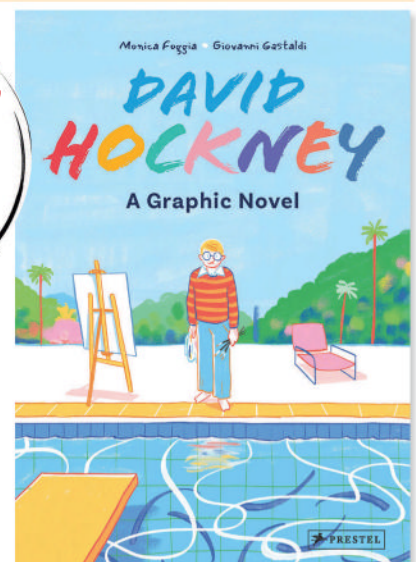
It's an absolutely remarkable book, not least because there is nothing about it not to love. I just want to pick it up and give it and its subject a hug. Handled wrongly it could be a joke, but the authors balance good humour and good nature perfectly and give us a story that is personal in its detail and brings its subject to life in a way that text never could.

The basic facts are laid out in a five-page introduction. What follows are lively and deceptively simple snapshots that brim with character and tell a compelling tale.

Prestel (prestel.com) £19.99, 128 pages (HB)
ISBN 9783791380353

Buy it!

For more fun than you have a right to expect



The Manchester Art Book

Ed Emma Bennett

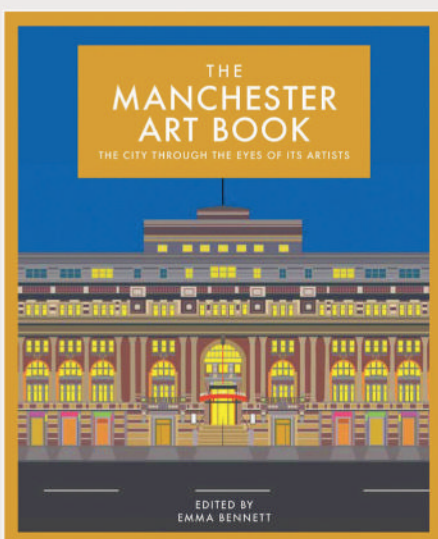
Calm down, our kid, of course you knew Manchester had a flourishing art scene. The rest of us just need a moment to catch up. Not just flourishing, in fact, but positively vibrant, as this enthusiastic and really rather joyful celebration shows. The sheer variety of styles, media and approaches illustrated is positively inspiring, both to consider a visit, but also to get the materials out. The subject matter is mostly the built environment, but includes details, quiet corners and pure graphics as well as more impressionistic depictions by no fewer than 50 local artists. Apart from a short introduction, there is no commentary, so the more general reader will be left to do their own research. That is not necessarily a bad thing, because you can concentrate on what inspires you rather than being lead around by an over-talkative guide.

This is part of a series, so get exploring!

Herbert Press £16.99, 128 pages (HB), ISBN 9781906860974

Buy it!

One for the Mancunians but, if that's you, definitely



For a huge range of inspiring practical art books that can be purchased at discount prices by our Studio Members from our online bookshop visit www.painters-online.co.uk/ArtSupplies

Turning PROFESSIONAL

MONTH
EIGHT

Rodney Kingston shares his experiences of his first year as a full-time artist

Regular readers may recall I have had a particularly busy couple of months. Alongside two public displays of my work to prepare for, I have had ongoing workshop and demonstration commitments, and time spent investing in developing the business side of being an artist by completing an intense Business for Creatives bootcamp.

As I sit in my studio surrounded by recent work, art materials, easels and a paint-splattered floor I am reflecting on the recent weeks and feel incredibly grateful for the knowledge I have gained by completing the course run by Mastered. So, what made it so good? For starters, my mindset has changed from being someone who has given up employment to 'try and make it as an artist' to someone who has given up employment to 'grow an art business and thrive as an artist'. It is a big shift and has come as a result of learning the skills to be successful in all the areas essential to any business.

As a group of creatives – others from my cohort included photographers, videographers, creative agencies, a voice coach, a games publisher, a mural artist and more – we offered support for each other and enjoyed a shared understanding of the challenges of being creative people in the business world. That camaraderie was useful and valuable. Our time together, which has been spent on hours of Zoom call seminars

and peer group sessions, culminated at an in-person event in Guildford. That event was yesterday (as I type) and gave us an opportunity to discuss the modules we'd studied, remind ourselves what we had discovered and each give a five-minute presentation about our business. Spending time with this group of creatives reminded me of the importance of community even in solo pursuits.

Some of the standout subjects during the course for me were when we explored our core values, reviewed our branding and studied marketing. Through a series of tasks we each discovered the three most important values to ourselves and worked through how they inform and shape our business model. With branding we looked at what we want to communicate, how that aligns with our values, researched what fonts, colours and themes help project the messages we want to give. The marketing module included research into who our clients are, what are the best channels to reach them and processes to discover answers to those questions. To a certain degree it has been a journey of self-discovery and understanding of why I am inspired to paint certain subjects.

One aspect about my work became clear to me over the duration of the course. There is a common thread throughout my paintings whether that be a London scene with a well-known landmark, a quieter view of the Thames close to home in Staines, the outside of a football stadium as fans arrive for the game, an iconic footballer painted onto a retro football shirt, portraits of friends and family (my own or those who commission me), a collection of objects from my kitchen or art studio – they are all depictions of the 'every day'. That observation and understanding is useful to me in many ways as I develop creatively, personally and in a business sense.



▲ A rare bit of painting this past month



▲ Meet-and-greet demo at Spelthorne Artists Unlocked event



▲ An organised studio made it easier to prepare paintings for display

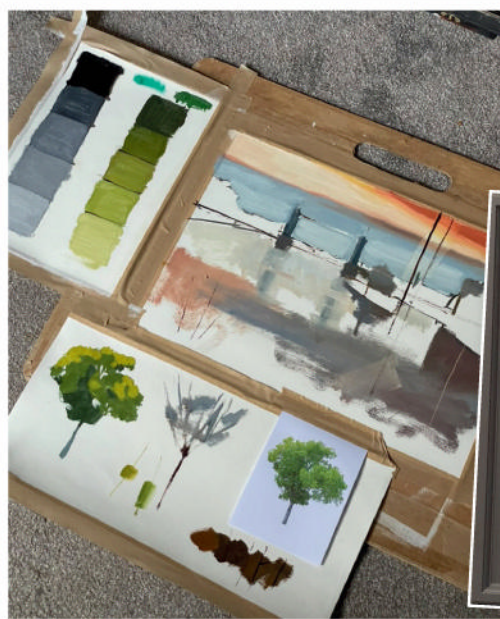
We also studied finance, sales and networking. Each module was a whistle-stop tour, taught at some pace but also in depth and, for me, immeasurable in terms of how useful the teachings will be for years to come. I have a long list of action plans!

I'm sure it's obvious from what I'm writing that I would recommend this bootcamp by Mastered or something similar to any artist already self-employed or thinking about becoming so. I'm grateful it fell into my lap so early in my journey of self-employment.

The course has occupied my thoughts but I have also been busy in a very practical way preparing for displays of work in both Staines and Esher on the same weekend. It feels like a distant memory but I certainly knew about the logistical demands of both when I was in the moment. They were great opportunities to raise awareness of my paintings and services and to transform new work, that was previously unframed, to being ready for display. Being organised in the lead-up was vital, so, knowing the dimensions of the wall spaces I had to fill was important, choosing appropriate works for each location, framing the work, preparing labels, checking hanging methods – in both cases wood screws – and making sure my drill was charged! You get the idea, there was lots to think about and get done. Once all these tasks were ticked off and the work was hung and ready for viewing, I could at least relax and enjoy the weekend.

The Staines venue was for an event called *Spelthorne Artists Unlocked*, organised and funded by the local borough council. Through the efforts of Charlotte Skinner, Arts & Cultural Development Officer, the weekend was a great success. There was so much interest in the various artists and groups taking part from people in Staines. I enjoyed many good conversations about oil painting and the scenes I'd captured locally of the Thames, town and surrounding area.

The Esher venue was an art fair which I'd booked many months before as something to work towards and to test the waters of showing at art fairs. A few times in the past I have had a stand at an art fair in Teddington with mixed feelings about how worthwhile it had been. I went into the Esher art fair with an open mind but eventually concluded that it isn't an avenue for showing work that I will explore anymore. I don't feel comfortable with the model of paying money to display my work to get it seen by the public. As well as art fairs I've also hired gallery spaces on a few occasions but for now I am going to explore alternative ways of getting work seen in person. Showing at




◀ Some workshop examples and an opportunity to use my brushes

▼ A recently framed work ready for public display



the art fair and subsequently coming to that conclusion made the weekend worthwhile. I also had enough sales to make it OK from a financial point but like I say, I feel there are better ways to reach the public – gallery representation, open studios, getting work on the walls of businesses and I'm certain many more avenues to explore.

Thinking back to the bootcamp again, time management was another module we studied and now that these recent commitments written about in this article have passed, I will be organising my time so that I can get back to more hours at the easel. After all, that's the whole point of this lifestyle! I've managed a little time painting in the form of demonstrations during

workshops and one venture to Fulham but not much else and I can't run an art business if I don't actually dedicate some serious hours to painting and developing my skill. I look forward to reporting next month on what I get up to and what inspires me next. 

Until then, *thanks for reading!*



● To find out more about Rodney, his work, exhibitions and courses, go to rodneyston.com



Ready for the doors to open at an art fair in Esher



Ask an Artist podcast was devised by working artists **Laura Boswell** (printmaker) and **Peter Keegan** (oil painter) in 2019. Laura left the podcast at the end of 2021 to explore pastures new and **Tom Shepherd** (watercolour painter) joined Peter as the new co-host. The podcast is designed for working artists and makers, who are looking for tips and advice, ideas and strategies not only for making, but selling their art too.

KIMBERLEY KEEGAN SHARES TIPS AND ADVICE FOR WORKING ARTISTS



KIMBERLEY KEEGAN

The **Ask an Artist** podcast has been releasing episodes for over five years, with total downloads now exceeding 450,000. The podcast aims to assist and support working artists and makers with the administrative and business side of being an artist. This year, podcast producer Kimberley Keegan has been writing this exclusive Q&A feature for *The Artist* magazine, sharing advice from the podcast and her own wealth of experience. Kimberley, who has a Fine Art degree and is a qualified teacher, is also the co-director of Art Profile, an agency representing over 150 UK artists who teach workshops and deliver demonstrations for art clubs, groups, and societies. You can listen to the podcast on any of the usual podcast platforms such as Apple Podcasts or Spotify as well as via the dedicated podcast website, askanartistpodcast.com

If you are a member of an art club or society, contact Kimberley on info@artprofile.co.uk or take a look at the Art Profile website for more information: artprofile.co.uk

Q I recently attended an art workshop with a really respected artist. It was hosted by someone in the UK but the artist himself was from abroad and had flown over especially to give this workshop. I paid a lot of money to attend but was really disappointed; the artist did not do anything that I would consider teaching. We essentially got to paint in his presence! I came away from the workshop feeling quite annoyed and like I had not got my money's worth. What can or should I do about this?

A It is the reality that there are some creatives who are very good artists but not good teachers, yet they are giving workshops when perhaps they should not be. Sometimes, said workshops end up being more of a vanity exercise for the artist as opposed to delivering a quality piece of education and it sounds like that is what has happened here. There can be a place for this type of experience, but if it's not what you were expecting or what was promised, that's a problem.

All three of us have been in your shoes, attending workshops where we were expecting to be taught more and shown more, but ultimately, we were left to our own devices with some minor, not particularly useful, advice. Good education, art education in particular, is something



Peter Keegan teaching a class

we all feel particularly passionately about. At the moment, maybe due to the rise of online learning, it does seem that there is a plethora of artists who are turning to teaching and therefore, I think it's more important than ever that we champion the good ones and weed out the not-so-good ones. Good teaching is something that needs to be learnt, developed and honed in its own right; it is not okay to paint alongside your students and dress it up as teaching. If this is the experience on offer, it should be made really clear at the point of sale that this is what people are buying. If

you were promised lots of demonstrations, critiques and one-on-one time which never materialised, you absolutely should make the course provider aware of this. Feeding back is important for a number of reasons, not least because you don't want the pattern to keep repeating and for this artist to be invited back only to deliver another mediocre experience to more unsuspecting students. You are also helping to protect the venue, as their reputation will be brought down by association, and in turn, possibly the other artists who teach there too. So, although this type of conversation can be awkward, you are doing them a favour. At best, they will apologise and offer you a refund in-full or in-part. At worst, they will ignore you, but at least you will know you have done everything you can.

Looking at it from the other side, Peter and Tom both teach, and agree that if someone had a bad experience in one of their workshops, they would want to know about it. Receiving feedback from previous students is how they have shaped and honed their current classes. In my experience, any teacher worth their salt will be humble enough to admit they don't know everything and that they are always developing. It might feel a bit critical in the moment, but in the grand scheme of things, it is positive for everyone. If you are someone who hosts workshops, either

yourself or for other artists, a takeaway point for you is to be really transparent from the outset about what it is that you are selling. This will mitigate customer complaints and dissatisfaction down the line; remember, no-one likes a surprise in this situation. Be super clear about what the student can expect, from the number of hours in the studio, to how long the tea break is, how many of the materials will be provided, to how many paintings can they expect to go home with. Will the artist demonstrate? Will the artist provide any handouts, or should they bring a notebook and take notes? Will they have time to look at everyone's work once finished, discuss and evaluate? Or is it a chance to paint alongside the artist and finish their work at home afterwards? Again, this is not really okay in my opinion, but if you are up-front about it, at least people know what they are signing up for.

There are some excellent art tutors and teachers out there, who really understand pedagogy but unfortunately, for every artist who 'wings it', it brings the whole industry down a bit. In summary, you owe it to yourself and the good ones to offer your feedback.

Q I have been accused by someone who I thought was a good friend, of copying her paintings, which I most definitely have not! She is a well-known artist in the area, but I can't see how she can have a monopoly on painting a certain subject, for example flowers, or a local landmark? I feel the friendship has most definitely ended and I'm not sure how to move on from here.

A This is such a sad question and a sad situation. If you are an artist who teaches, then there is a certain inevitability here; if you teach people to paint like you, they will go ahead and paint like you. I'm not sure if that is the situation here with you and your friend, but even artists who work closely together (geographically or theoretically) will end up emulating each other's style; it's how art movements have started and existed for centuries. Look at the Impressionists, for example, they went out painting in the open air together, like many artists still do today. Of course, the resultant paintings will end up looking fairly similar; I challenge you to walk around an exhibition at the Mall Galleries and not spot several paintings of London in the rain, which include a London bus and a black cab. Are these artists copying each other? I don't think so.

When an artist produces, in this case a painting, they own the copyright for that painting; that is widely understood. This means no-one else can reproduce that image and put it onto tote bags, for example, without the artist's permission. But if they have painted a picture of Big Ben, of course it's not possible to 'copyright' Big



Students critiquing each other's work



Materials ready for a workshop

Ben, and stop any other artist ever painting it in the future! Why would they want to do that anyway? It sounds to us like the person doing the accusing here lacks some self-confidence in their own work and maybe there's a bit of envy at play? My advice to you is, you know the truth; you know that you have not copied this artist's work. I think it's important to try to reach out to them and state your case – that you weren't copying, this is something that you have arrived at yourself. If you were inspired by them in some way, I also think it's important to tell them this; give credit where credit is due. Be open, honest and transparent and ultimately be the bigger person in this situation. I think that can only reflect well on you. It's up to them how they take it – they may continue to feel and act sour about the situation but that's their problem then. Hopefully, they won't; hopefully they will come round and see things from your



Students in a workshop

perspective and the friendship can be salvaged. Just to flip this scenario round and look at it from the other side: as an artist, you do have to be aware that if you are good at what you do, you are going to inspire others, but everyone has something completely unique to bring to their art and inspiring others is not the same as them copying you. As Oscar Wilde said, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. Given enough time and freedom, they will develop in a different direction. They may be on a very similar curve to you, but you will always be that little bit further ahead on that curve. If you honestly do feel someone is copying you, such an accusation should be really well founded and never be dished out lightly, as it can have serious consequences. Tom knew an artist who had a very specific style of working, even as a youngster. He was the first to admit he was heavily influenced by one particular artist and it was clear to see this in the work, even though there were also distinct differences. One day he got an e-mail from the agent of the other artist, very accusatory in tone; accusing him of 'ripping off', and that he was in breach of copyright for copying his style of working (you cannot copyright a style, or an approach). The saddest thing about this is that it destroyed this artist's confidence, and he stopped painting completely. He hasn't picked up a brush since.

So, if and when doubt does creep in about other's copying you, do ask yourself, is this really the case? Is the world really not big enough for the both of you? Because most of the time, it probably is.

TA

These questions are all taken from episodes of the podcast: to listen to the answers in full, check out the following episodes: Listener Questions 25 and Listener Questions 14. If you have any questions relating to your painting practice that you would like answered please email theartistletters@tapc.co.uk



Mike Barr

is a Fellow of the Royal South Australian Society of Arts. He has won over 80 awards, including 17 first prizes. You can find more of Mike's work at mikebarrfineart.com

The benefits of a painting series

However many times you paint a subject, there will always be something new to discover. **Mike Barr** encourages you to paint in series

While some artists refuse to paint the same subject more than once, those who do are in good company when we think of the likes of Monet with his famous haystacks and cathedral series. And while we might argue that Monet was exploring the effects of light at different times of the day and at different seasons, the benefits of such a way of painting are still important to artists today. Importantly, paintings done in series don't have to be executed one after the other. They could be weeks or even years apart. Painting the same thing in a row multiple times could easily burn-out our enthusiasm for any subject.

The benefits for doing a series of paintings, even over many years, are worth mentioning. Firstly, there is the enjoyment of the artistic challenge of tackling the same or similar subject in different ways. A series is not the act of doing the same painting over and over again, but rather a process of painting a subject from different standpoints. That could even mean using a range of palettes to obtain a new effect.

Painting the 'guts out of a subject' can be very satisfying for an artist and the viewing public. One way of expressing different things from a subject can be as simple as abstracting certain elements rather than the whole painting. It is certainly a worthy departure from trying to make a painting look like the reference all the time, even if the reference is from real life.

One of the biggest advantages for an artist to engage in painting series, is the development of seeing the possibilities in any subject. It is like a training exercise in seeing beyond the immediate reference. After many years of painting, I can say that it is a very big step in an artist's personal journey. So, while some may make comments like, 'can't you paint anything else?', we can rest assured that you are taking big leaps in becoming a true artist.



Like anything, repetition fine tunes your process. In painting, it produces a degree of confidence that always shows in your work. Such a confidence reveals itself in a painting in the form of a sense of flow, which can be missing completely in a work that has been heavily laboured. Artists that have such a flow will find that their paintings are more engaging – their confidence expresses itself in the attention of onlookers. It's almost a mystery that few talk about, but it definitely exists.

So, next time we are attracted to a subject, any subject, think of ways in which you can tackle it. It may be a way of cropping, the use of different colours, swapping elements of the composition,

▲ **Another Storm at the Stag, oil on canvas, 39½x39½in (100x100cm)**

One of my latest paintings has been a series that started as a couple of small works, but now has developed into this major piece. The Stag is an iconic building and hotel on the fringe of the Adelaide CBD (central business district).

softening certain items and sharpening others, and my very favourite – adding figures in the landscape. Series painting is an exciting aspect of an artist's work that will give so many benefits and so much joy. Above all it will expand your way of looking at life in ways that others may not have considered.

ITA

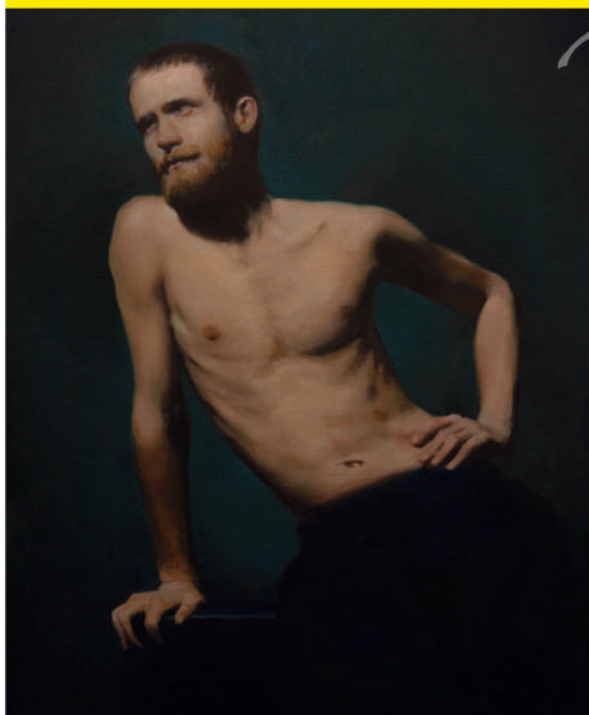
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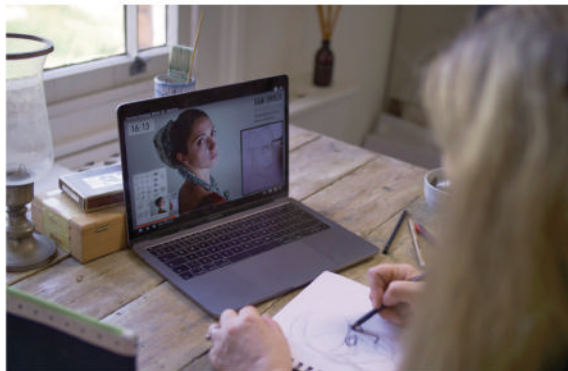
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