

Painting: Transcending the Photo Reference

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Dear Painters,

A few notes before we meet for the workshop. Please read this in entirety. I appreciate your attention and commitment to the workshop I have created for you.

Materials

The Materials List below outlines the specific supplies you will need for the workshop. Everything is available online at <http://www.dickblick.com/> or www.jerrysartarama.com if you are unable to find it at your local art supply store. If you are still having difficulty finding what is needed, email me alyssa@alyssmonks.com, and I can sell you the supplies at 1.5x the cost, although this is a last resort, so do this for everyone, so do your best. I will have to transport the materials myself, so please let me know at least a month ahead of time.

It is important to get the exact color paints I recommend. Having given this workshop many times, it is the students who are prepared with all the right supplies who succeed the most and have the best experience. Having alternative colors or brushes puts you at a big disadvantage.

You may not use turpentine under any circumstances. You may not use hardware store grade paint thinner. Gamsol or Eco-House mineral spirits is the best option.

See attached images of brushes, paints, mineral spirits, and canvases.

Punctuality

I begin each day of the workshop with a lecture and demonstration. If you are late, you will miss parts of it and feel you are not getting the full experience. Please be punctual and allow enough time to travel to the workshop location. It isn't necessary to arrive more than a few minutes early, however.

Expectations

As you might infer, I take teaching very seriously, and I take your satisfaction of the workshop very seriously. I want to impart to you what I know about painting that I have learned from my teachers and through trial and error over 30 years now. So while I have put an extensive amount of time over the years listening to my student's needs and learning styles to continue to refine the workshop, I remember being a student, also. I know that workshops are intense, invigorating experiences in which a lot of information is given over a short period of time. For some this can be stressful, tiring, frustrating, and at the very least - uncomfortable. All of these emotions are natural and normal, but also exacerbated by *resisting* the experience and/or information. I ask that you relax and open your mind and just be in the moment with me. I have it all planned out for you so stay in the present moment every step of the way. I know you have your own way of painting, and this will feel strange and new and awkward. That's all part of learning. (think of going to a new country and expecting everything to be just like home - pretty frustrating if you don't enjoy the new ways of doing things and let go of home for a few days!)

Don't judge or criticize yourself in the process at all, but instead approach this new experience with *curiosity* and *enthusiasm*. You will get much more out of the experience if you do. Your goal is to learn and enjoy the surprises of seeing and making paintings in a new and different way. Make room for that and simply ignore any stress or discomfort you might have. Let the painting happen as you take in the information and don't worry about the end result or your personal ability. It also helps to get enough rest and leave whatever your dealing with at home or work behind for a few days. This will be so much fun!

***Please note you may take as many pictures as you like, but video or audio recording is not permitted. Anyone taking video or audio will be asked to leave without reimbursement. Thank you for respecting my privacy and business.

best,

Alyssa Monks

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This workshop is designed to guide the students toward creating a painting from a photo reference, using both indirect and direct traditional painting techniques. It aims to instruct painters on how to use the photograph to create a painting that surpasses the look of the photograph, not simply imitates a photograph. The workshop will explain how to create a useful photo reference, covering topics such as ideal lighting, camera settings, lenses, Photoshop, and printing. The process will begin with preparations such as choosing a composition through quick sketches from a variety of reference photos, progressive oil sketches with limited use of the photograph, and then laying in the composition with an imprimatura wash. When that is dry, the students will learn to create color relationships that portray the space and volume, creating the illusion. Emphasis is then placed on paint application and ways of activating the surface. By focusing on deliberate brush stroke and maintaining accurate color relationships rather than rendering, the application of paint to describes the form. We will accentuate the structural volumes of the form over the contour, concentrating on relating all parts of the picture to each other with an organized palette. From there, students will be guided towards deciding what information is useful to look for and what usual pitfalls to avoid when interpreting a photograph. Deciding when and how to invent and experiment is perhaps the most crucial part of the process. Students will be encouraged to look more at the painting itself than the photographic source, using it only for initial reference. We will explore ways of seeing the picture objectively, how to imply detail without overstating, and what level of finish works best for the particular painting or style. The painting will develop through indirect layers of opaque and transparent painting to achieve the delicate nuances of flesh and other surfaces. Methods of Glazing and Scumbling will be discussed. The final result can be a painting that captures the essence of your subject (and your connection with that subject) and contains the intimacy of the human touch that transcends a smooth *photo-realistic* image. There are a variety of results varying from abstraction/improvisation to a more illusionistic representation. All will be discussed and the challenges and rewards of each will be explored.

Syllabus

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- **Day 1:**
- Why this workshop/Objective of the workshop/Methods and plan
- What makes a good photo reference and how to create one in more detail and go over examples.
- Students will pick from **a supply that is provided** for subjects that interest them and are also good references to work from.
- Initial thumbnail drawings of the image and decide how to crop or recompose the subject.
- Imprematura demonstration to extrapolate and celebrate the essence of the image and compose the painting, explanation of measuring techniques for accuracy.
- Hone composition with as much detail as desired as they firm up their compositions. Complete 2 studies and 1 larger imprematura as well as the sketches.
- **Day 2:**
- Color progression/color relationships discussion
- Color mixing, (matching) and palette preparation, understanding color progression
- Discussion and demonstration on application, edges, brushstroke, thick or thin paint, etc.
- How to see volume instead of silhouettes and paint form, various techniques discussed
- Editing detail in photograph
- **Day 3**
- Initial application covering entire surface, taking care of color relationships and exploring new application techniques, to create initial illusion based on color in photograph
- Discussion on responding to the painting vs. the photograph.
- Experimentation and exploration: not following the photograph perfectly or literally. Making intentional strokes and informed decisions. When and how to experiment and why it's essential to the painting process.
- What is the useful information to look for in the photograph? Anatomical clues, volumes, structure, drawing issues solved by avoiding the silhouette and looking at the internal structure and volumes as opposed to the outline
- Pitfalls to avoid when reading the photograph
- **Day 4**
- Lecture on responding to the painting vs. the photograph.
- Discussion of desired results varying from abstraction/improvisation to a more realistic illusion
- What is the essence of your subject that must be conveyed with the intimacy of the human touch beyond the photo-realistic image?
- How to finish, what is finished, you are the first audience.

MATERIALS LIST

Contact me with any questions ASAP Alyssa@alyssamonks.com

18"x24" or canvas or linen I like Ampersands smooth panels, <http://www.dickblick.com/items/07030-2824/>

Canvas or panel must be primed with gesso and dry before class. A grid done in pen or thin sharpie (not pencil) over the dry canvas or panel is great before hand. The grid lines should be at 25%, 50%, 75% both vertical and horizontal for a total of 6 lines, creating 16 boxes.

3 (three) 4x6" gessoed watercolor paper or primed canvas sheets

small sketchbook and pencil or charcoal

Palette: I recommend the grey disposable paper palette, the largest size you can find.

palette container such as Masterson's for storing palette through the workshop (available at blick.com)

<http://www.dickblick.com/items/03020-0030/>

Brushes: You will need mostly bristle brushes, not soft sable types! Please be sure your brushes are made for oil paint, and are not flimsy or soft. You'll need a range of flats and rounds from a #2 up to an **inch wide** for the flats. Also, TWO 2-inch brushes (a house painting brush for oils from the hardware store is the best option). For example,

- Escoda Classico flats #6, #8, #10, #12, #14, #16, #18, #20
- Isabey Special Rounds sizes #1, #2, #3, #4, #5
- one Flat Isacryl Isabey in #4
- TWO 2-inch housepainting brushes from the hardware store made for oils



Viva Paper towels or blue **SHOP TOWELS** (the best!) flimsy paper towels are hard to work with. Make it easy on yourself and get the good towels.



Clorox wipes are **MUST**. Not baby wipes.



Oil Paints: Please contact me Alyssa@alyssamonks.com if you have trouble finding any of these colors and I can get them for you and you can pay me back in class. All are available on Blick.com

- Transparent Red Oxide (old Holland)
- Blue Black or cold black (Williamsburg or other)
- Titanium white (Large Tube)
- Flesh ochre (old holland), PLEASE DO NOT BUY FLESH TINT!

- Yellow ochre (gamblin)
- Sepia extra (old holland)
- Phthalo green (gamblin or other)
- Kings blue DEEP (old holland)
- Violet grey (old Holland)
- Sap green (for landscapes!)
- Brilliant Yellow pale (williamsburg)
- Raw sienna (gamblin)
- Madder Lake Deep (old Holland)
- Brilliant Yellow pale (williamsburg)

additional pigments:, NOT NECESSARY FOR CLASS, just for your curiosity...

- Turkey umber (williamsburg)
- Yellow green (for landscapes)
- Canton Rose (williamsburg)
- Green ochre (williamsburg)
- Scheveningen Red medium and light (old holland)



Palette knife: mixing knife and painting knives.

Mediums:

- Linseed oil (NOT STAND OIL)
- Odorless mineral spirits (NOT TURPENTINE or HARDWARE STORE PAINT THINNER!!)
- 2 Empty glass jars with lids to hold your mediums

