Portrait Painting in Oil

Stephanie Deshpande
INSTRUCTOR

Mondays, Sept. 24 – Nov. 26, 2018 | 7:00–9:30ᴘᴍ

Girl in Blue, Oil on Panel, 14" x 11"

Visual Arts Center of New Jersey
68 Elm Street, Summit, NJ

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Portrait of Serena, Oil on Linen, 20" x 16"

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Introduction

In this course students learn how to create a realistic portrait using oil paint. Stephanie Deshpande will explain the process of starting a portrait beginning with the underpainting, building up the colors, and finalizing the image. Oil painting techniques will be discussed as well as the differences between alla prima and indirect painting methods. Deshpande will talk about the importance of comparing values, measuring, finding edges, and looking for color relationships. She will outline the simple steps to create a successful, expressive portrait.

Supply List

General Materials: Palette, 2 metal paint cups, small painting knife, paper towels, cotton rags, straight skewer, plumb line, brush cleaning tank, view finder (Recommended: Picture Perfect PlusView Finder).

Brushes: Various size bristle brushes and sable brushes (ie. Fliberts, flats, rounds, fan brushes – sizes 14, 8, 6, 4, 2)

Palette Colors: Flake White Replacement, Quinacridone Violet, Quinacridone Red, Cadmium Red Light, Transparent Earth Red, Cadmium Orange, Yellow Ochre, Indian Yellow, Cadmium Yellow Lt., Cadmium Green, Cerulean Blue hue, Ultramarine Blue, Gamblin Asphaltum, Ivory Black

Ratios to paint Fat-Over-Lean:
Lean medium for under-painting: 1 part medium to 1 part OMS
Medium for middle layer: 2 parts medium to 1 part OMS
Fat medium for top layer: 1 part medium to 0 part OMS

Preferred Mediums:
Neo Megilp, Refined Linseed Oil, Stand Oil, Gamsol (Odorless Mineral Spirits)

Canvas:
Panels or canvases sizes: 16"x20", 14"x18", or 12"x16" (Recommended: Gessoboard Panel or Fredrix brand pro series linen)

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Painting Process

STEP ONE: COMPOSITION

- Use a view finder to make sure your sitter fits well on the canvas. It's important that the subject is not too small or too large.

- Portraits are more successful when the sitter is approximately painted life size. A good guide is to draw the model's head about the size of your hand (6-8 inches). Position the portrait 2-3 inches from the top of the canvas.

- Use the Golden Spiral as a compositional guide. Your eye should be able to travel around the canvas with greater detail at the focal point.

- Notan is the Japanese concept of harmony between light and dark. Make sure you have enough contrast in your image. Look for a graphic balance of light and dark.

STEP TWO: DRAWING

- Sketch the composition on your canvas to see if the placement works graphically. Make adjustments until you are happy with the general layout.

- Check the basic measurements (width to height), and fix inaccuracies in the drawing.

- Focus on the drawing the shadow shapes. The shape of the shadows will help to describe the form of the face.

- Observe the tilt of the line and angles. Look carefully at forms and where they peak. Mark key points.

- Always paint fat over lean by using less oil to more oil in the medium. Make adjustments in your drawing before you apply more paint.

STEP THREE: BLOCK IN COLOR

- Start to refine your drawing, and add the main colors that you see. Block in the large, simple shapes.

- Start to establish the tonal composition. Paint what is easy first. Indicate the shadows, mid-tones, and highlights.

- To recreate the experience of seeing something as you normally perceive it, it's important to understand that you only focus on one point at a time and see everything else with your peripheral vision. If you are looking at the highlight, you won't see the details in the shadow. So when you are painting, if you start looking into the shadows and adding too much detail, then the painting won't look naturalistic. Step back from your work to make sure you are painting the subject the way you would view it naturally.
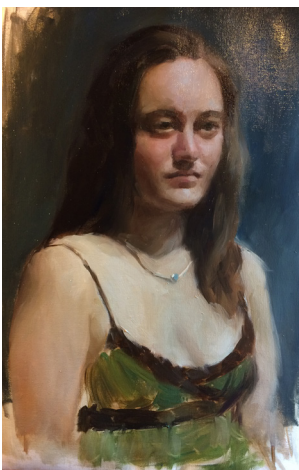
STEP FOUR: ADD DETAIL

- Before you add details you need to set parameters. Look for the sharpest edge, and don't let any edges get sharper than that. Also find the softest edge, and make sure no edge is softer than that. Decide which is the lightest light and the darkest dark, and make sure you keep all the middle tones proportional.

- Evaluate the edges by squinting at the subject. Try to see where the tones are the same value and blend together.

- To harmonize the colors in the painting, use a color from the background in the subject.

- Once you have the general form established, paint details carefully starting with the focal point. Use a smaller brush and work more carefully to render the small variations in color temperature.

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STEP ONE

STEP TWO

STEP THREE

STEP FOUR

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Portrait of Iasha, Oil on Linen, 16" x 12"