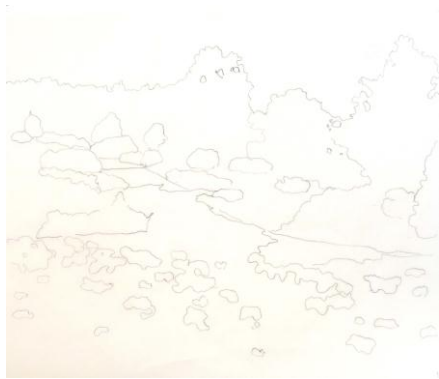


Impressionistic Gardens using Acrylics

There are some fabulous gardens in this country, many are open to the public and you can spend an enjoyable day taking photos or sketching, gathering reference for some wonderful painting projects to paint at home.

There is nothing wrong with using photos, but I also like to use sketches and I feel that using a sketch can often make me far more creative than having a photo in front of me. It makes me think differently about my subject, as well as the colours I use and can often lead to some surprising results.



Contour drawings

Drawing just the shapes can free up the desire to slavishly copy a view. The results are almost abstract and can be a good base for using acrylics. Edges can move and a painting can almost evolve during the painting progress.



Tonal drawings are vital and this sketch will help me to isolate the dark areas from the light ones. A hatching technique is a quick and simple way to do this, leaving plenty of time to wander round the garden and create more.

Using a sketch also means that you only have your memory and a few lines on paper to work from, this means that the finished result is more a painting from memory rather than a copy of something and it can bring out the creative side in us.

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Materials used

Paper – Bockingford 140lb not surface A3

Paints – you can use any brand you wish, these colours give you a good idea as to the ones I used. I deliberately keep to the minimum as this makes mixing much easier and gives ‘unity’ to the finished picture.

Crimson
Emerald
Cadmium Yellow
Ultramarine
Titanium White

Brushes

Terry Harrison Mock Mongoose ½ “ Oval, equivalent to a Synthetic Oval
Fiona Peart Classic Round, equivalent to a number 12 round squirrel

Water pot – nice big bucket. Avoid a small jam jar.
Masking tape.



My work area.

Make sure you have a steady platform to put your paints and water pot. Using an easel and painting in an upright posture will result in a more dynamic painting and prevent the ability to fiddle with details.

If possible make sure there is enough space to walk back and view the picture in progress from about 2 or 3 metres away.

Tape the paper to a board using masking tape.



Step 1 Blocking in.

Draw the contour drawing onto the Bockingford paper and block in the tonal areas as indicated on the sketch.

The dark areas are made up using Ultramarine, Emerald and Crimson and for the dark tone on the right add Cadmium Yellow. To lighten the tonal values, add a touch of white.

For the very light tonal areas, begin using Titanium White and add a little Emerald, Cadmium Yellow and a tiny touch of Crimson.

Use the Mock Mongoose brush and broad brushstrokes to block in the simple areas of colour.

Step 2 Adding mid tones.



Begin adding the mid tones using brighter colours. Into the dark areas add strong cool blues, Use Ultramarine and a touch of white, dabbing the brush onto the paper to create texture.

Tip - Don't worry if the colours merge on the brush leaving two colours on the paper, this all adds to the textures created.

Avoid watering down the acrylic paint too much at this stage.



Once the mid tones are added, the very light tones can be placed where the sunlight falls. Use white and a touch of Cadmium Yellow and Ultramarine. At this stage the painting looks very simplified, with no attention to detail. Already the main tonal shapes are evident and this helps to ensure that these bands are kept accurate.

The paper is all covered, the paint is applied fairly thickly and all using the same brush.

Step 3 Adding blocks of interest



Change to the Classic Round brush, this will result in blobs of colour rather than strokes.

Using the tonal drawing as reference, begin to separate the different shrubs. Keep to the same mix of colours and add just enough water so that the paint comes off the brush. It should feel sticky so a blob of colour remains on the paper.



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Pressing the brush against the paper onto its side rather than just using the tip will create pointed sections representing flowers. Use the brush in the direction that the flowers grow in to suggest movement.

Diluting the acrylic with just enough water so it flows off the brush will result in the colours underneath showing through. This technique of glazing can be very useful for adjusting colours without losing the previously applied colour.

Step 4 Building up layers



Acrylic is so versatile that thin layers can add luminous lights on top of very dark areas as well as opaque colours sitting on top of perhaps unsuitable ones. This of course means that you can continue to work on a picture until you are satisfied with it.

Tip – Avoid adding white if a thin transparent glaze is required. Add white to achieve opacity.

Step 5 Adding Interest



Using the Classic Round and a mixture of White with a tiny amount of Ultramarine, blob in tiny sky areas to suggest breaks in the foliage.

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Once the shrub shapes are established, added colour can then be positioned to create more interest and colour. Use Crimson with a touch of White, or add Ultramarine to create mauves.



Ensure the tonal values are maintained. If flowers are in shadows use very little white, even if they are pale flowers. Add more white to the flowers in the sunshine.

Tip - Avoid creating any specific detailed shapes as this will be out of keeping with the impressionistic style of painting.

Step 6 Developing the foreground

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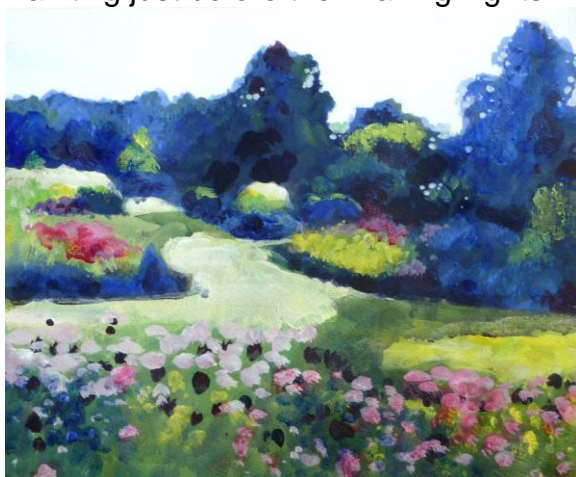
It is often tempting to add detail into the background, but this can lead to a cluttered painting, keep the background simple and concentrate on adding flowers into the foreground.

Drag the brush sideways slightly to create oval shaped flowers, place light colours over dark as well as covering some sections with bright green.



Add more blue, keeping it darker in the shadow areas adding white in the lighter areas.

Painting just before the final highlights.



Final Step adding the finishing touches.

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All that is needed are the light highlights on the flowers in the distance, this suddenly makes them more apparent, and the foreground flowers developing.

More darks are then added.

Adding the flowers in layers creates a mass of textures and gives the impression of a full flower border.

Individual flowers merge into clumps and masses creating the busy foreground yet still simplified enough to work well against the garden backdrop.



Acrylics can be so rewarding. The ability to place one colour over another enables a vibrant build up of colours.

Sticking to just five colours also enforces unity in a painting and makes mixing much easier.

I hope you have enjoyed reading through this demonstration and that you will have a go at something similar yourself.

Good luck with your painting

Fiona