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Introduction

If you have purchased this course you are more than likely wanting to improve your drawing and painting skills so that you can confidently paint or draw animals. Students often fall within two categories. Those who want to have a bit of fun, they like animals, they enjoy painting wildlife and they perhaps like to dabble and paint their own pets or their friends or family pets and give their artwork away - but have no intention of selling or exhibit. The other category of students usually wants to improve so they can set up their own business and wish to take commissions from the general public or start to exhibit or sell in galleries.

Drawing and painting for fun - the first category.

If you fall into the first category, you will be wanting to learn new skills to please yourself and your close friends and relatives. You will probably be taking a lighter approach to the course, having fun along the way, experimenting with different materials and perhaps combining this course with your local art groups, or other courses you are doing possibly with other subjects too. You find it recreational, relaxing and fun with very little pressure.

Drawing and painting for Commission

If you are looking to set up your business in Pet Portraits I can help you to look objectively at your work, to look at the commission process from the point of view of the customer, I will talk about the importance of customer service and your reputation.

If you have any questions or queries about the course, or if there is anything you don't understand, please don't hesitate to ask when you send me your artwork.

Mediums

The course introduces you to many different mediums, including Graphite Pencil, Coloured Pencil, Pastel, Acrylic and Oils. What about watercolour I hear you cry? In my personal opinion it takes years of practice to become a proficient watercolourist. There is no getting away from the fact that watercolour is a hard medium to learn and you really need to be adept in drawing animals before even considering this task. It is one thing to be able to paint an atmospheric watercolour landscape, but quite another to realistically portray a detailed head study of a dog. It is even more difficult to use the kind of loose wet in wet techniques from landscape painting and successfully in a pet portrait. It's possible but you would need rock solid under drawing to pull this off. For this reason I have not included watercolour in the course.

Many students are afraid of trying new mediums though fear of the materials being expensive and not liking the medium. I cannot deny that some materials are expensive, however it all depends on how and where you purchase them. I would strongly advise you to begin with a small range of colours in each medium. You may wish to buy a few individual colours, you can always add to this selection at a later date so you can experiment with the medium. I would advise against buying expensive starter kits, they are often presented in wooden boxes, or with pallets and

brushes that aren't particularly suitable. This tends to raise the price and isn't as economical as it may look. They can be more about the presentation of the materials, rather than the materials themselves. Also you may find you don't get on with the medium and are stuck with expensive equipment.

This course relies heavily on using photographs as reference material. **DO NOT MAKE ANY ANIMAL UP FROM MEMORY OR IMAGINATION FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS COURSE.** I encourage you to take your own photos if you have the resources, or alternatively you can collect pictures from the internet.

Finally try to find a place where you can set your tools and artwork up where you aren't going to be interrupted. It can be frustrating if you are being constantly moved from the kitchen table. Also I recommend purchasing a daylight bulb for your lamp. You can get them in many art shops or online. Daylight bulbs produce a much more natural neutral light without the orange cast of traditional bulbs.

TONES USING PENCIL AND COLOURED PENCIL

So, how do we create many different tones with our pencils? The answer lies in the pressure applied to the pencil. Pressing down hard on the pencil obviously results in a bold dark line, lighten the pressure and you get a light delicate line. Try this yourself. Using either a pencil or a coloured pencil, draw a dark line and then draw other lines along side, gradually releasing the pressure until you can go no lighter. Now draw one continuous line. Start the line by using a lot of pressure and draw the line while gradually releasing the pressure, until there is in fact no pressure and the pencil leaves the paper.

Finally, hold the pencil in the 'flat position'. Begin with a very dark area, you will probably need to go over this a few times to build up the tone. Work the pencil across the page, once again gradually releasing the pressure. During this shading exercise your pencil should not leave the paper. The result should be a graduated tone from dark to light with many tones in between. It is important to practice this until the graduation is even, and there are no stops and starts.

Try shading graduated tones using the other methods of holding the pencil. Experiment with tones; try covering a large area with a single tone with one pressure. Practice going from light to dark and back again. You can see from my scribbles below that this simple pressure technique can create quite convincing forms. Notice how the light areas appear to bulge forward whereas the dark areas recede.



MIXING COLOURS

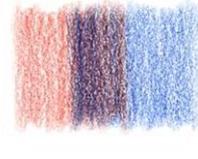
If you have to mix colours to create another colour make sure you don't make your picture look muddy. Experiment by using complimentary colours (red, yellow, blue) to make other colours.



Blue + Yellow = Green.



Red + Yellow = Orange.



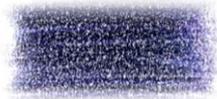
Red + Blue = Purple

Creating Blacks

Pure black does have its place, but it tends to be very "flat" when used alone. A richer black can be achieved by mixing Blue, Purple and Dark Green in numerous layers. Then add bits of reflected colour into the mix. Even using one or two of these colours under black will give it a richer look. Also experiment with other colours that can make black.



Medium black



Cold black



Warm Black



Black used alone

Acrylics are an excellent medium for portraying animals as they are so versatile. However, the fast drying time makes blending colours and tones difficult. This can be overcome using the techniques shown on the following pages.

The study of a young cat is painting in acrylics on a muted coloured mount board. I find mount board and canvas the best surfaces to work on for acrylics however, as I mentioned in the materials section the choices are endless.



Direction of fur is very important when painting any animal. Acrylic painting is no exception and is a very important aspect when creating the fine thin strokes. **First lay down a block base coat of the darkest tones, don't mix too much water with this you are looking to create a solid layer of paint, this will help your animal to look solid.** Then block in the mid tones. Once you have your base coat you can start to build up layers of fur using very fine brushes. Acrylic can be very hard on your brushes so make sure you keep them well washed between each session. You will need to make sure you keep a fine point to your brush especially for the fine detail at the end of the portrait.

Build up your layers of fur gradually, as you can see from the close up of the illustration on the left almost every hair has been painted to create the illusion of depth and three dimension. This all helps to give the animal the realistic quality you are looking for. Keep looking at your reference photo at all times.

When you are painting fur, always start from the base of the hair. The stroke will naturally get thinner towards the end of the hair as you gently lift your paintbrush off of the canvas.

Exercises set 3

We have covered quite a bit in this chapter, you should have thoroughly read and perhaps practiced a variety of things including tongues, noses, dogs' toys, reigns, black, white and wet dogs and also followed step by steps of dogs in coloured pencil, pastel and oils.

The third set of exercises are to practice techniques and subjects covered in a variety of mediums. Work through the exercises and send me your results along with the reference photos you have used. Let me know why you chose the mediums and how you got on with the exercises.

1 Find a photo of an animal with its tongue out. Try to capturing the whole area including the mouth, capture the colour of the tongue, the wrinkles and the texture in any colour medium of your choice. You can just paint a simple square of the portrait with the mouth and surrounding fur just like the example in the course on page 120.

2 Find a photo of a dog wearing a collar that you find interesting to paint. Similar to exercise 1 draw or paint the collar in a square shape similar to page 117. Use any medium for this task.

3 Find a photo of a dog and its toy and try to paint or draw the area in question. There is no need to paint the entire photo, just concentrate on the area where the dog and the toy is located.

4 You can use any animal for this next exercise. I would like you to paint or draw the subject's nose in detail. Use a good quality photo for this task, choose one where you can see the nostrils clearly and one that has a good light source. Again paint a square including some of the animal's fur / area of the mouth if necessary around the nose to set it in place.

5 In this exercise you are drawing or painting a full portrait in a medium of your choice. Find a close up reference photo of a horse's head with reigns and bridle. Make sure you capture the three dimensional qualities of the reigns and bridle. Take note of the shadows and highlights, not only just on the reigns but the shadows they make on the horse itself.

In the course so far we have covered eyes, noses, reigns bridles, shadows, highlights, long fur and short fur so you should by now be pulling everything you have learnt together in this one portrait. Take your time over the portrait and make sure you find the best quality reference you possibly can. You can add a simple background colour behind - graded, mottled etc. of your choice.

Send me all of the reference photos you have used for this set of exercises and let me know how you got on. Why did you choose the mediums you used? Did you find anything difficult? How did your colour mixing go? What paper, pastel, pencils or paint did you use? Do you have any other question you would like to ask?

Enclose your comments with your work and I will help you as best I can.