



The Still Life Course

Module 3: Painting Project 1

Painting: Layering of colours on a black canvas

The purpose of this still life painting project is to use simple plant shapes to **explore 'visual textures' through translucent layering, and shading** with the full spectrum of colours.

Materials to be used

A 40x40cm canvas covered with a mixture of pumice gel and black fluid paint, leave to dry overnight (see video tutorial released at the beginning of the Still life course). The principal set of Golden fluid colours, matte medium and paintbrushes, pointed, flat, angled and a fan brush.

Process

Create a still life composition featuring two cactus plants in pots, see the following Pinterest board for inspiration or use the example and templates of the cacti as used in the video demo:

<https://uk.pinterest.com/estemacleod/explore-colour-cactus-inspiration/>





As per video tutorial, use the fan brush to move paint in different directions to fill the plant, container and background shapes. Take care to use the brush almost like a dry brush technique, too much paint on the brush will create puddles or flat areas of white flowing into each other. The objective is to get thin lines filling the different sections of the cacti, background and plant pot shapes.

In the video you will see dragging and stippling. Make sure not to overwork the areas, but create different white marks that will make interesting under painting marks, to enable a richer surface to make more layers on. Cover several areas, making marks corresponding with the different surfaces, as seen in the video tutorial and leave to dry completely.

With a flat brush, cover the entire canvas with a thin layer of matte medium. This is in order to prepare it for the next layer of paint. Leave to dry. Mix around one teaspoon of matte medium with a mixture of your choice to create a translucent layer of green paint. Cover the cactus plants shapes. Mix another colour to cover the areas of the pots, then the table area, and background. At this stage it might start to resemble the tissue paper still life creations to a degree. The objective here is to create translucent coloured layers that will allow the white marks to show through as a lighter green, in the case of the cacti.

Paint the containers, and the table surface area, use an opaque colour (like blue and white mixed with a bit of paint medium). Depending on what you would like to achieve with your artwork, you can keep it simpler by defining the shapes by painting in a background colour.

More Layering

To explore translucent layering, use a shading colour (a mixture of ultramarine, burnt sienna and matte medium) apply this in very thin layers onto the plant forms, keeping the shading to one side of the plant to add dimension. You can also do more translucent colour layering to enhance depth of colour.

White used for layering

When I paint with white, I do not add matte medium to it, in order for it to remain very opaque. When I identify the areas that I want to highlight, or create details on, white is applied with an angled or pointed brush. When the area with white detail is completely dry, you can add a layer to build up the shape. A mixture of matte medium and a VERY SMALL quantity of Azo yellow create a vibrant colour. If you mix pthalo blue, or burnt sienna with this, the layer will become greener, or with the brown added, a less bright yellow.

Remember to keep the layers very thin. Matte medium is the 'paint carrier' but you can add water when it feels too sticky, or start to dry. Take care not to exceed a ratio of more water than medium to paint with, since this will compromise the outcome. You can continue adding layers, and if you want to add more detail, or wish to change a colours completely, apply a layer of the white paint, let dry, and paint a new colour on top once dry (see the bottom area of the demo painting change during the video)

Fine detail on the flowers and cactus can be added with the white paint and an angled, flat or sword brush. Shadows can be deepened with more layers of ultramarine blue and burnt sienna mixed with matte medium.



This project's focus is about the use of colour and layering. Created to try out the different brushes, using matte medium and white for detail.

Please note: This painting project is part of The Still Life Course. In the interest of artistic integrity, please do not share the material or processes with others. The course is intended for personal artistic development and to expand artistic practices. Please do not post artwork outcomes on social media, if you choose to sell artworks created as part of the course, please do not advertise them on the internet. If in doubt, please contact me.



