



NEWSLETTER Summer 2018
[Editor: Brian Richardson]

Annual Exhibition 2018

The entry forms and rules for entry are enclosed with this issue of the newsletter. The exhibition is the annual showcase of the work we do, and the committee is hoping for a good entry from members.

NB Unless otherwise attributed, the following reports are based on Sam Dauncey's write-ups for the website where the illustrations (and more of them) can be seen in colour.

Demonstration: Boatyard in Watercolour, Kim Page, 23 March

Watercolour is Kim's favourite medium. He stressed the importance of preparation and not rushing.

Also:

- a Buy good paper, not one containing wood pulp (tonight's was Arches 16" x 12")
- b Only two or three brushes are needed (sable is best and not as expensive as it used to be).

Tonight's were a No.14 and a No.12

- c Choose your colours to suit indoor lighting which is where the paintings are most likely to be seen.
- d Make sure your paint is soft (prepare pans by spraying them with water in advance)
- e Decide what is going to be the centre of interest (start there) and plan the composition to support it

His starting point tonight was a photo taken at Walton-on-the-Naze, in Essex (see below).

Kim had mounted the paper in a commercial stretcher. 140 and 200 lb papers are marginal for use without stretching but he prefers not to wash the sizing off by heavily wetting it. In really hot conditions he would wet the back of the paper only. This has the advantage of slowing the drying.

He aims to cover the white of the paper with only a single wash. Watercolour dries paler than it appears when first applied, so the washes need to be strong without too much water in the brush (just dip and shake). He rarely builds up colour with multiple washes.

The board often has to be upright instead of flat when demonstrating so the inevitable runs need dabbing off (with kitchen towel)..

Kim does not like masking fluid so he puts down separate blocks of colour, leaving white between to avoid unwanted bleeding. You can still let colours bleed within a block of colour, of course, if you want.

He mixes his colours in a custom paintbox/palette with deeper than normal wells. This ensures uniformity of colour over the area being painted (some other painters re-mix frequently, sometimes even for each brushful).

Starting with cobalt blue he dabbed in the sky (not a flat wash but leaving white for clouds). Alizarin crimson darkened it near the horizon.

Next he filled in the shapes he had drawn for the boats and other structures. Don't get rid of the white of the paper too soon - once it has paint on it you can't really remove it all.

Another thing is not to be obsessed with straight lines, even for things like masts. They are much more convincing if you do them with a fine, fairly dry brush (a rigger holds a good lot of paint), by eye, without trying to make them uniformly thick.

A pale ochre/ultra represented distant trees. Cadmium yellow lightened it a little and a slightly darker version (with added French ultra) served for the far bank.

Then Kim started on the water with big yellow/brown reflections followed with a red-brown (Prussian blue and alizarin). Since this is wet-into-wet, remember to add paint to the brush, not more water (which would "cauliflower").

It is for big areas like the open water that his big mixing wells come into their own. He mixed a blue and yellow-ochre "mud" for this and put it on, almost dry-brush, with fast horizontal strokes.

The final stage involves last-minute touches that can make or break the painting. A rigger adds crucial detail.

Eventually time was up but I should mention four points I noted out of context:

- 1 The finger is an invaluable watercolour painting tool but there is a place for digital (computer) painting, too. This is taken so much for granted by younger people that exhibitions are going to have to accommodate it in future.
- 2 Know your kit - only then can you concentrate on the art.
- 3 Learn to draw with a brush - particularly relevant if you do it for life-drawing.
- 4 Don't show watercolours without a mount.

Thank you, Kim, for a great evening.



Kim's original reference photo



Kim's final painting

Demo by Elizabeth Baldin, 27th April 2018, "Flowers in Watercolour and Acrylic Ink"

Liz trained in graphic design in which she spent 80% of her time with 20% on painting, but the proportions are now reversed.

She works in all media. Each has its own characteristics but working in several enables them to feed off each other - all getting better.

For this evening she used Rembrandt and Winsor & Newton watercolours and FW acrylic ink on

stretched Arches 140lb NOT paper. She would normally work with the paper horizontal but for the demonstration worked with the board upright with its associated risk of runs.

She first proposed to demonstrate watercolour and acrylic ink and then acrylic with watercolour over.

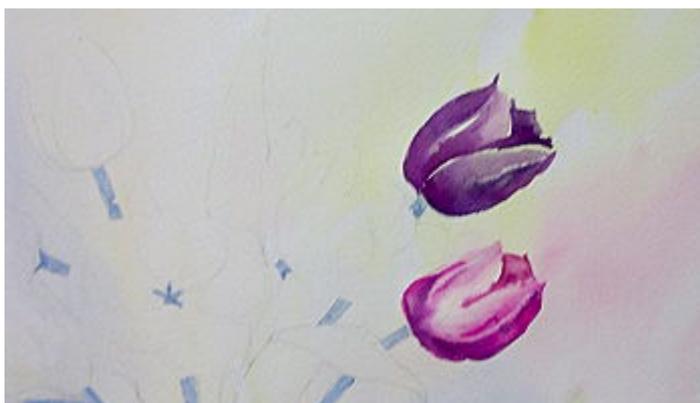


Elizabeth's original photograph

She had pre-drawn an arrangement of tulips in pencil and even put blue masking fluid where the stems would be.

In her palette she made pools of watery cobalt blue, Naples yellow and alizarin crimson (from the tubes) but before putting them onto the paper she wetted most of it so that the glaze would be soft and very pale.

She recommended a lovely shell pink in the Rembrandt range as a good basis for the tulip colours. She did the flowers "Chinese style" using a very limited number of careful strokes with a fairly big round and well-loaded brush, each stroke starting with the tip and then gradually pressing further down, rolling and twisting it before lifting it off. Often these strokes were then softened with a big, just moist, flat brush.



Before the paint had a chance to dry Liz introduced a darker shade made by adding more purple and/or indigo to the pink – and even cadmium red but not cadmium orange which would result in a dirty brown.

Virtually everything was done wet-into-wet, one bloom at a time. The green of the leaves was done with a cadmium lemon underpainting with a drop of cobalt blue added later and some indigo for the darks underneath. The masking fluid was then removed and, changing to acrylic inks, the stems were painted

and working very quickly, so it did not dry between glazes, she continued overpainting with plenty of water thinly enough to strengthen but not cover the watercolour, adding a vibrancy that would have been very difficult to achieve with plain watercolour.



End result

About three-quarters of the way through the demo when she had done enough "acrylic over watercolour", Liz turned the board over to show another piece of stretched paper complete with another prepared outline drawing of the same arrangement of tulips. For the "watercolour over acrylic" technique a cheaper paper is acceptable (Bockingford?). The technique is much quicker so is excellent for sketching. She started drawing outlines very rapidly in dilute Paynes Grey FW Acrylic Ink, using a sharpened wooden coffee stirrer. The uneven lines produced with such a "pen" are much more pleasing than obtained with a conventional one. Liz worked on one bloom at a time, used a clean wet brush to make the ink bleed from the line into bloom before it had started to dry. It took only a few minutes to complete all the outlines, bleed them in and reinforce any lines that needed it.



FW ink drawing

The resulting monochrome sketch was thoroughly dried before introducing the watercolours roughly with a flat brush, the dark lines defining the edges so the colouring could be very loose. A second coat of

colour and a few extra touches of Paynes Grey brightened everything and brought the demonstration to an end.



End result FW ink plus watercolour

The following points were noted:

- 1 When stretching paper, let it stand for a while after soaking before taping it down - and avoid cheap adhesive tape.
- 2 Look carefully at flower heads: they are sometimes contra-intuitive. Lilies, for example, are lighter in the centre where you would have expected dark.
- 3 Use separate brushes for each colour to keep the colours clean and strong
- 4 Develop your own style by painting or drawing something every day. Liz sometimes has a sketchbook on her lap while watching TV.
- 5 An eye patch is a good Idea when doing life drawing.
- 6 Do not use acrylic with your best brushes - you can never remove every trace of it from between the bristles, so it will gradually build up and ruin them.

It was a very good demonstration.

SURREY HEATH SHOW, Saturday 19 May

The Society once again participated in this annual event and were given an excellent corner pitch in the marquee where the paintings on display were seen to good advantage and at much reduced risk of accidents due to carelessly driven pushchairs. Four paintings were sold making it the best SH show for sales so far. The fact that there were fewer stall holders in the marquee could well have been due to the clash with a certain royal wedding in the morning, the FA cup final in the afternoon, and also it was not a bank holiday weekend. The paintings sold were one each by Ann Bullimore and Vicky Harte and two by Sue Whitehead.

[Brian Richardson]

Demo by Paul Lewis, Birds in Watercolour and Pastel, 25 May

Paul likes to paint from his own photos and sketches.

For tonight, he offered us a choice from half a dozen photos. The overwhelming favourite was a Grey Heron from Frensham Pond, unusually posed with its neck buried between its "shoulders". He looked carefully at the colours in the photo before choosing a sheet of pale blue pastel paper. This late

choice of paper excused him stretching it but his painting technique actually minimises wrinkling.

Paul prefers to paint with the board upright, even with watercolours, because only then do you see the work in the same way as it will finally be hung.



(Ed's note: When asked if he always worked sitting at a low level, Paul replied that the ideal is for the eyes to be at the same height as the centre of the painting. He was sitting a little lower for the demonstration probably to reduce obstruction of the view for the audience.)

He uses fairly big brushes, typically Nos 12,16 and 20 round. One brush he keeps just for water, as opposed to paint: for wetting the paper and softening edges. Similarly he has two pots of water: one for rinsing brushes and one for clean water. To keep colours fresh he takes this even further: one brush for warm colours (reds/oranges) and one for cooler ones (greens/blues).

Using one of his smaller brushes (size 12?) Paul lightly moistened a fairly large area in the the centre of the paper. For drawing, he mixed a pale grey that would be clearly visible against the paler blue of the paper itself.

With the same brush he began drawing the outline of the bird and then scribbling some background tones very roughly and superficially with the same brush.

He kept mixing fresh paint so the colours were never exactly the same but at this stage they were always very thin. The brush was never overloaded and he applied paint so quickly that he suffered very few runs. More purple/blue was added for shadowed areas. A green was mixed for the background vegetation.

It was difficult to see what each stroke was for: Paul scribbled in an area and then left it to go somewhere else (to unify the picture). The strokes seemed almost random although they were undeniably in the right general areas!

He was asked about he direction of his brush strokes: "They relate to the subject matter", he said. Bunches of vegetation were very stylized but then the "clean" brush came out to soften edges away.



Intermediate stage

Paul took much more care over the bird itself. Several edges were re-positioned, particularly the beak (which had been too long) and both sides of the body. This sometimes involved moistening existing paint and lifting it out with a clean damp brush. The eye position, relative to other marks, is critical.

There are so many blacks that it is better to mix what you need rather than use a ready made black. He uses Windsor Green, Windsor Blue and Cadmium Red in various proportions for his "blacks".

As the first half of the evening went on Paul's colours gradually became less pale. It became clearer then that he was not painting a bird - he was painting marks he could see in the photo, scarcely concerning himself about their precise significance.

After the coffee break he turned the picture upside-down. This is an effective way of checking the composition - it identified a couple of errors although, interestingly, he turned it back the right way up to correct them! Then came the pastel.

Paul uses Jaxell square pastels; a French make. They have an intermediate hardness: soft enough to let you make strong marks; hard enough not to crumble. For pastel-on-watercolour work he uses only as much pastel as is necessary to make highlights and detail.

There are dozens of pastels in a box so he advises choosing all the colours you expect to use before you start. He spent quite some moments studying the (dry) watercolour and picking out 8 or 10 corresponding pastels. After testing them on the edge of the paper just to be sure, one or two were replaced.

His practice of moving all over the picture continued here: "Don't get into detail in one place". Paul again started with paler colours, touching them in here and there as well as making the occasional deliberate confirmation of an edge.

We all know that black-looking areas in a photo are not really black and so here he just used two shades of blue pastel. Paul never filled an area with colour all at once: he scribbled some marks, went somewhere else and then returned repeatedly so that the gaps were gradually filled.

Some areas (the yellow round the eye, for example) were still easier to do with a brush. Paul has no objection to going back and forth between brush and stick.

The final touches were with pure white, giving a surprising lift to areas of blue paper which one had previously been seeing as white.



Demo end stage

The painting was not really finished but the evening had given us a great impression of how a coherent picture can be built up from hundreds of small marks and how slavish copying of detail is not necessary for a satisfying result.

Contributions for the newsletter are very welcome, preferably on an art-related theme, and should be submitted to:

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Your views on any exhibitions you visit would be especially welcome.