



ODIHAM ART GROUP DEMONSTRATION REPORT

The Barn Owl – Acrylic demonstration by Chris Jones, 7th July 2018

Chris Jones had brought along some of his poultry paintings for us to see, which are commissioned and exhibited worldwide. For commissioned works he uses oils but he also works in acrylic, favouring Liquitex Heavy Body artist quality acrylics which work in a similar way to oil paint. It is a very healthy niche part of the art market as apparently breeders with a champion bird love having portraits of their pride and joy on the wall – who knew!

However, for our demo Chris intended to paint a Barn Owl from a photograph taken by one of his friends. He had already done a detailed pencil drawing of the image onto primed mountboard and he started his acrylic painting with Ivory Black, painting a very slightly diluted central background around the bird. When he announced he was using black there was a combined intake of breath around the room but he explained that he always creates a monochrome underpainting as a base because it will come through all subsequent layers and helps him find the correct tonal balance from the outset.



The next stage was to establish the mid-tones in the bird and the surrounding straw, using a more diluted wash of black. He works on the same principle as oil paint – fat over lean. The flat black background then got a mix of Burnt Sienna and black scrubbed across it to warm it up, followed by a light wash of Raw Sienna on parts of the wings.



Chris began working on the straw with a wash of Raw Sienna and Yellow Ochre then moved onto detailed work on the owl, using an interesting mix of various olives and greens (not specified) for the shadows on the bird. Washes merged into one another to soften edges and enliven the white left on the page - he explained that pure white paper can give just as 'dead' an effect as flat black so you need to be very careful to keep the correct tones and brightness even on the bright areas of the painting.



Chris added more Burnt Sienna to the black to give it some depth and life and ensure the owl stands out from the background, then mixed a tiny bit of Ultramarine Blue with Titanium White for the highlights on the eye. He explained that at this stage of a painting he always mixed his colours with some proportion of either black or white to ensure the tones worked. By now he had moved to thicker paint, using Naples Yellow and white on the top of the owls' head and using brush strokes in the direction of the feathers to indicate the curve of the head and body. He said that the more layers of thick paint you have, the more convincing the image will become.





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Moving back to the straw he used a mix of Ultramarine Blue, Raw Umber and Ivory Black to intensify the depth of the straw and make the image incredibly lifelike. The final touches were some intense white highlights around the bird and voila, a superb painting of a Barn Owl, created on one of the hottest afternoons of the year when England were playing in the World Cup quarter finals and there were whispered reports of the current score throughout the demo.



Well done Chris for a most instructive and entertaining afternoon despite the distractions!

Christine Sharp