



ODIHAM ART GROUP DEMONSTRATION REPORT

Elizabeth Baldin – Watercolour and Acrylic Ink techniques, February 2017

Elizabeth has a background as an illustrator and print designer as well as an artist and she freely admits to using all media, with a current tendency to work in acrylic paints. However for this demonstration she concentrated on watercolour and acrylic ink techniques which, as she explained, work very differently but complement each other perfectly. She aimed to show us two ways of combining the mediums; the first one using watercolour then adding acrylic ink, the second using the inks first with watercolour wash afterwards, which was a much faster way of working and gave a very different result. For both paintings she used the same colourful photo of sunflowers as an inspiration.

She worked on stretched Bockingford paper 200lb and mixed puddles of colour in her pallet - namely Cadmium Lemon, Naples Yellow, Ultramarine Blue, Perylene Maroon (new one on me), Cadmium Orange and Dioxazine Violet, noting that she always mixes too much rather than too little as it's almost impossible to match washes if you run out half way through. One of her maxims is that "the only paint you waste is the paint you cannot use as it has dried up in the tube". She tends not to use staining colours, such as Windsor Blue and the like, as they cannot be lifted out of the paper – an essential part of this technique. As far as inks are concerned she reminded us that they do mix well and can be diluted so there is no need to buy lots of colours; Elizabeth recommended having two yellows, two reds and two blues to suit your style plus white and either black or Paynes Grey. She advised against buy a pack of colours as inevitably there would be some bottles you would never use and also reminded us that you need a ceramic mixing palette, as acrylic inks are impossible to clean off a plastic palette.



First, the watercolour followed by inks. There was no drawing involved, she got straight in there with a wash, aiming to pull the image out of the colour on the paper (Elizabeth described this stage of the process as "a controlled mess"!). She began the painting by sloshing water onto the paper using random strokes across three broad areas and then dropped blobs of C. Lemon, N. Yellow and U. Blue into the water and let it flow, moving the board around to gently guide the colour. She added Cadmium Orange and a little Perylene Maroon into the centre of where she judged each flower would emerge from the washes, followed by blobs of Dioxazine Violet for the darks. She was always conscious that it is important to keep the painting as loose and open as possible and always to leave gaps of light and white in the image. Then came the fun part. She stood back and looked hard at the washes to 'find' the edges of petals and leaves that appear out of the washes. Elizabeth did use a soft light pencil to outline the shapes she saw emerging but stressed that she would not usually use pencil, it was just to indicate to her audience how she saw the image progressing.



As Elizabeth began the more detailed work she recommended that it always helps to draw an arrow onto the support board showing the direction of light on your image. She began

to lift out some colour, creating petals with soft and hard edges and adding more violet to the centre of the flowers whilst wet but all the while ensuring she kept the edges of the petals clear. Ultramarine Blue added to the back of the yellow washes created soft green leaves and darks were mixed by combining Perylene Maroon and Dioxazine Violet (sorry if this report is starting to read like a chemistry lesson). She stressed that tone is even more important than colour when painting, and that you should try and work with your accidents rather than go over them time and again at which point the image will be stale. Finally she dropped bright yellow ink onto some of the petals and then drops of white ink to make the highlights zing.



Her second painting used acrylic inks to create a 'skeleton' image then added watercolour washes once the inks were dry. Her drawing of the sunflower was done by dipping a split wooden 'stirrer' acquired from Starbucks into a puddle of quite strong Paynes Grey ink and using it as a quill to lightly sketch the sunflower. Elizabeth let the ink dribble onto the paper, allowing the line to have varied weight and strength, and then followed up by wetting some of the ink and pulling it across to form a loose wash which must be allowed to dry flat otherwise the colour runs to the bottom of the wash or line and solidifies very quickly leaving an ugly blob. Once the ink had dried she went over the image with a loose colour wash to highlight certain areas but not 'colouring in' – you have to leave lots of highlights to make the image come alive. She added some spatter (very trendy) and loose scribbled marks just to 'relax' the image and voila! A beautiful ephemeral painting of a sunflower created in about half the time of the first painting, very impressive.



I am delighted to say that Elizabeth has agreed to run a workshop for us in the future so watch this space – it's bound to be extremely popular.

Report by Christine Sharp