



# ODIHAM ART GROUP DEMONSTRATION REPORT

## Paula Vize ~ techniques in Watercolour and Acrylic, September 2017

Paula had originally offered to demonstrate painting birds but the afternoon morphed into a wide-ranging talk covering loads of tips and tricks of the trade using both watercolour and acrylic, so if this report seems as though it is a little random please bear with me!

Paula started with a brief history of her route into becoming a professional artist which, after working in retail management for several years, began to take off by word of mouth and a number of lucky contacts and then really gathered pace after she did Open Studios back in 2000. Within a couple of years London galleries and dealers were offering to promote her work and she rapidly became much sort after by collectors. In fact she became so successful that she was able to make the decision to pull back a little and now just does the subjects and commissions that she wants to do. She urged all of us not to give up doing something that we love and to keep on being true to your own vision, as you never know what will be around the corner – wise words.



She recommends keeping lots of stretched watercolour paper on boards, ready to work on, so if you feel the urge to paint you can just go for it. It also means that you can swap between watercolour paintings in progress, giving one the proper amount of time to dry before the next stage whilst you work on another. Excellent advice if, like me, you've been too impatient and continued fiddling with paintings when you know you should step away, inevitably leading to poor results and the waste paper bin.

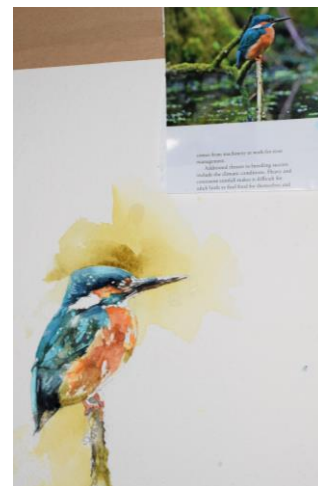


She has a very loose painting style so it came as a surprise that she carefully draws her subject onto the paper or canvas with a 2B or 4B pencil before painting. This gives her the correct 'skeleton' for the subject and allows her to be as free as she wants to be with colour and tone because she knows the inherent dimensions of the subject are correct. When doing portrait commissions she takes her own photographs then does a first sketch with pastel, followed by a watercolour sketch and then does the final painting, so she is confident she has got to know the subject well enough to catch a likeness. She uses 140lb watercolour paper or ready stretched canvas' and does not mix colours on a palette at all for either watercolour or acrylic, preferring to place thin washes over each other to create the right colour and tone – but Paula stressed that this method only works if the proceeding layers are bone dry or the result will turn to mud very quickly. Winsor and Newton watercolours and Golden acrylics are her mainstay. Paula paints with a limited palette, although certain colours are among her favourites including Green Gold, Terre Verte, Paynes Grey, Turquoise and Cerulean Blue but she never uses white or black on watercolour paintings. She uses sable brushes for watercolour but 'any old brushes' for



acrylics and oils (recommends using Swarfega to clean them) and for both mediums she tends to favour Filbert brushes as they are so versatile.

Paula had brought a couple of paintings that were 'in progress' to show us her techniques at first hand and started with a watercolour painting of daffodils. The body of the daffs had been painted with a fresh lemon so she began to work on the background by flooding the top of the paper with clean water then dropping Davy's Grey into it then moving the board so the colour puddled in the correct place. Once this was dry she dropped Sepia into it to warm the area. She then turned to a lovely painting of a kingfisher, dropping Green Gold colour onto the area behind his head then using what remained on her brush to delineate the stem and branch – using the same colour around the image helps to unify it. If the brush is a little dry it just helps to show texture. She never uses a hairdryer as this tends to separate colour pigment and creates ridges in the colour and she also does not use masking fluid preferring to keep white highlights by control of the paint rather than artificial means. Also she urged us if using this technique to resist the temptation to go back into a drying 'puddle' with a brush as that ruins the effect – patience is all! The kingfisher had turquoise acrylic ink on the body and Paula further accentuated this by adding Prussian Blue, reminding us that you can always dull colours down but you cannot make colours more vibrant by continuing to work on them. She then brushed Raw Umber onto the birds' beak and popped indigo around the eye to create depth and at the end of the tail, to strengthen the line. Following this she put Sepia onto the branch to help 'discover' the kingfishers' feet, rather than painstakingly drawing them in, goes over the breast with a hint of orange to lose the stark white of the paper that remained and added a touch of Cerulean Blue to the back of the head.



Putting the watercolours aside Paula then moved on to an acrylic painting of what can only be described as a hen having a very bad hair day! She doesn't use a stay-wet palette, preferring a basic plastic palette which she keeps wet and workable by spraying constantly with water. Her base drawing was very detailed, showing all the clumps of feathers and Paula proceeded to paint these in with a mix of White and either Paynes Grey, Indigo or Black – she did recommend investing in a good quality White with acrylic as it forms a basis for so many mixes and needs to be able to cover the base drawing. Cheap substitutes will show the pencil marks once dry.



When doing something fairly large scale (this painting was on a 60cm x 60cm canvas) she always does the eye first as it gives her a reference for the rest of the painting. Interestingly she does not often use white for highlights in the eye as she's noted that animals' eyes often have different hues when reflecting light. She tends to use pale blue for highlighting hounds eyes and for this chicken she used washes of thin Turquoise to create shadows and contrast in and around the eye.

Paula's relaxed and charming demonstration on a wide range of techniques was very interesting and enjoyable – the trick is now to put them all into practise!

Christine Sharp  
September 2017