



ODIHAM ART GROUP DEMONSTRATION REPORT

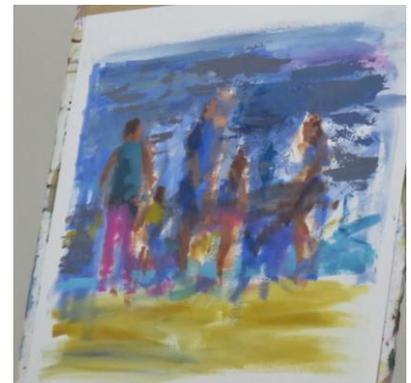
Figures in a beach scene – Acrylic demonstration by Soraya French, 3rd February

We were delighted to welcome Soraya French as our demonstrator this month and she did not disappoint. Working from a photograph of a group on Southwold beach she began by explaining that she happily embraces all manner of technology if it helps her create a composition, as cameras, iPhones and iPads are an easy way to capture a scene which you can put to good use back in the studio. The photograph she used as a basis for her demo had been painted before but she often returns to the same subject time and time again – and the resulting painting is always different. She loves putting figures into a painting as they animate the scene, but the trick is to put them in the right place!

Soraya uses Golden acrylics as she loves the consistency of the paint. Starting with an unprimed piece of mount board she very roughly sketched in the position of the figures with a brush and faint lines of pale raw sienna, making sure the composition was balanced. Her tip was, if you're not used to doing figures, keep any preliminary drawing to an absolute minimum and definitely don't draw an outline then 'fill in' with paint – this makes the finished article look very stiff and static. Treat figures as just another collection of abstract shapes; when they come together the eye will recognize it as a human figure.



After satisfying herself the composition worked Soraya then roughly blocked in the figures with a mix of Burnt Sienna (BS) and Titanium White (TW) followed by using the same kind of rough marks to block in the sea and beach with a thin and fluid wash. Each time she picked up a new colour with her brush, after using it on the main subject she 'cleaned' her brush on other parts of the painting – these faint rough marks help link the painting together. Using Pthalo Blue (PB), Ultramarine Blue (UB), Lemon Yellow (LY), BS and TW she began to mark darker areas on the figures, always considering the final colours that would be applied on top of this underpainting. The figure on the left wore vibrant pink shorts and Soraya used Medium Magenta to begin to give the painting some 'zing' (she gave us a very useful tip that mixing Quinacridone Magenta and TW creates Medium Magenta). Now she picked up a narrow palette knife and painted the negative shapes between the figures in strong blue greys (using UB, BS and TW) - strong darks will allow the highlights to 'pop'.



Leaving the figures to dry a little Soraya moved to the foreground, scraping Pumice Gel over the beach area to create texture to the foreground. She then used a mix of Cobalt Teal (CT) and TW on the near waves to set off the figures in front. She stressed the fact that tonal values, highlights and a sense of movement were all essential to the composition, it was important to work the background and foreground in such a way that the figures did not look 'stuck on' the painting. Using Buff Titanium (BT) she highlighted areas of the figures then got to work with oil pastels, soft pastels and acrylic pens to bring out certain highlights and create more texture where needed.





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The end result sparkled with colour and movement and, whilst Soraya said it was not quite finished, everyone admired the way she had built up the painting to become the vibrant scene before us. Her advice was to take risks – sometimes it pays off, sometimes not, but remember it is only a painting and we learn from our mistakes and move on to the next challenge all the wiser for taking a chance the first time round.



Excellent advice and a fascinating demonstration of technique from a highly successful artist, thank you Soraya!