



# ODIHAM ART GROUP DEMONSTRATION REPORT

## Stewart Beckett – Landscapes in Acrylic, October 2017

This demo was full of useful notes on technique and colour mixing as well as lots of useful 'short cut' hints. Stewart had brought a photograph of the River Avon to use as his inspiration for the demonstration, which was going to be painted onto a linen canvas. His 'palette' consisted of a cheap aluminum catering tray, opened out flat, with some damp kitchen roll under a sheet of tear-off acrylic palette paper – much cheaper than the store bought version. The canvas had four dots in the middle which allowed Stewart to note where certain elements of the composition fell on the canvas and he had a variety of brushes with him as his aim (which sometimes fell by the wayside!) was to use one brush for each colour, ensuring the hues stayed clear and vibrant.

Starting with the sky he used a restricted palette of Payne's Grey (PG), Ultramarine Blue (UB), Phthalo Blue (PB), Raw Sienna (RS) and Titanium White (TW), mixing various tones of PG, UB and TW then scrubbing them on to the canvas with energetic brush marks with the aim of losing the overall white of the canvas, blocking in the sky. He pointed out that there is aerial perspective in cloud forms as they tend to get closer together the further away they are from the viewer, and that a blue sky tends to get darker and warmer as it gets nearer. He then moved to a mix of RS and UM for the middle area but made sure that the tone of this mix echoed the tone of the earlier blue just above it, so that the sky gently dissolved into a warm distance. Moving on to the landscape he mixed (deep breath) Ivory Black (IB) with Lemon Yellow (LY) to create the block of dark trees in the foreground. Much to my amazement the IB created a lovely rich dark green which was painted on thickly.



Going back to the sky Stewart mixed RS and TW for the bottom strip of sky, then put a very pale blue just above it which created a silvery sheen in the far distance. He made the point that you should always mix your colour on the palette next to the colour it's going to be next to on the canvas; that way you can judge whether the tone and shade are correct. He had some other useful tips as he worked away at the sky area such as;



- Don't be afraid to change things and always use loose brush strokes, working the sky into the clouds so you don't see strong hard edges.
- Soft greys in a mid-tone are the secret of making clouds look believable and try to use at least three tones to define the shape – tones are more important to him than colour; as he put it "You can put the right tone of the wrong colour in the right place and it will work, but the wrong tone of the right colour won't!"
- He always stands back and squints at his paintings regularly when he's painting so he can check the tones are correct.

- He also recommended that, if you cannot resist introducing a new colour into the painting, make sure you use it in more than one place.

For the mid distance Stewart used Golden Yellow (GW) to highlight the sunlit fields in the valley and also dropped some reflections into the river, reminding us that the reflections we would see from the paintings' viewpoint would not be of the clouds in the painting but of those unseen directly overhead. He used broken brush marks to indicate the trees as well as a scrap of florists netting which he used as a 'stencil', dabbing a thick mix of LY, IB and TW through it to highlight the leaves and dropping in a tiny bit of deep red which kept the green vibrant. To create a focal point he used LY and TW with a touch of IB to the horizon, blending it in to the canvas with his finger which created a sense of depth to the centre of the painting. Using a range of greys he continued to work over the sky and the river, ensuring that he had strong darks next to strong lights at the centre of the painting to create a focal point.



The end product was an evocative landscape full of movement and light. We hope to welcome Stewart back for a workshop, which will be something to look forward to in the future.

Christine Sharp