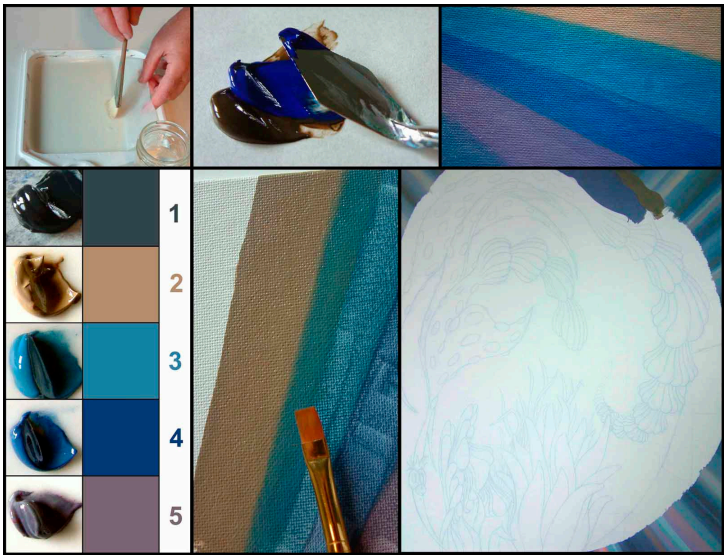
PAINTING WITH ACRYLICS: PART 2

PUTTING PAINT TO CANVAS

Brenda Hoddinott



Y06 ADVANCED: CREATING IN COLOR

This is the second in a series of six lessons that takes you through the process of learning the basics of painting with acrylics. In this lesson, I show you how to set up a wet palette, mix paints, and paint a pattern of stripes.

This lesson is divided into the following four sections:

- **Setting Up a Wet Palette**
- **Mixing Paint – Scoop and Spread!**
- **Mixing Background Colors**
- **Painting Stripes**

This project is recommended for artists from age 12 to adult with good drawing skills, as well as students of home schooling, academic, and recreational fine art educators.

10 PAGES – 27 ILLUSTRATIONS

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SETTING UP A WET PALETTE

Figure 601



As I briefly discussed in Part 1 of this series of lessons, a wet palette (Figure 601) is ideal for painting with acrylics. You may not find one exactly like mine, but most stores that sell acrylics, carry wet palettes of some sort.

1) **Place a sheet of thick absorbent paper into the tray (Figure 602).**

2) **Use a large brush with soft hair to add just enough water to make it wet.**

3) **Gently place a piece of thin paper on top of the thick paper.**

   You may have to fight with this paper to prevent the edges from curling. If this happens, just brush on a little water to make the paper lie reasonably flat.

4) **Brush the wrinkles out of the top sheet of paper (Figure 603).**

   Pick up a side of the paper and lift it slightly. Dip your large brush into clean water and begin brushing the wrinkles toward the side you are holding. Be very gentle! You don't want to tear the paper!

   If the other side of the paper is also wrinkled, repeat the process until the entire sheet is smooth. If the wrinkles don't move easily, add a little more water with the brush.

5) **Tip the palette on an angle so the excess water pools into a corner.**

6) **Pour off the extra water, or use a sheet of paper towel to soak it up.**

   Place the cover on the palette to keep the papers damp, until you mix your paints.

Figure 602



Figure 603



(The wonderful hand model is John Percy)

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MIXING PAINT – SCOOP AND SPREAD!

In this section, I illustrate the step-by-step process for mixing paint:

- ✓ I first put out tiny dabs of base colors (colors straight from the tubes).
- ✓ Then, I use a palette knife to mix the colors I want.
- ✓ I add the new colors to the wet palette.
- ✓ Then, I tear off the top sheet of the disposable palette, and throw it in the garbage.

I'll start by showing you how to make black, and then change it into a dark gray.

1) Squeeze out small dollops of raw umber, ultramarine blue, and white onto a fresh sheet of palette paper.

Don't tear off the sheet of palette paper until **after** your paints are mixed.

Oh, and don't go anywhere – acrylics begin to dry in only a few minutes. If you need to leave, transfer the paint to the wet palette and cover it.

Figure 604



2) Turn your palette knife on its side and use it to scoop up a little of the raw umber paint (Figure 604).

Figure 605



3) Gently ease the paint off the bottom of the palette knife onto a clean section of the paper palette.

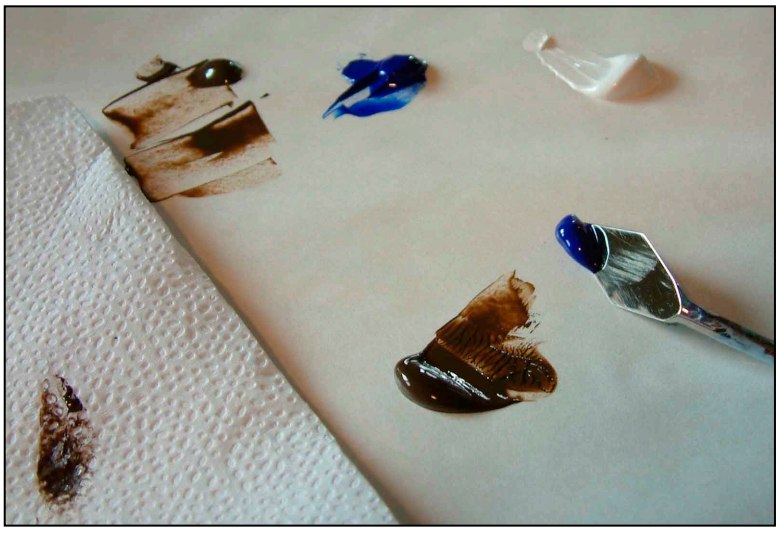
Refer to Figure 605. The movement is similar to spreading butter on a slice of bread.

4) Clean the paint off both sides of your knife with a sheet of paper towel.

5) Scoop up a little of the ultramarine blue (Figure 606).

Scoop up a little less than you did with the raw umber.

Figure 606



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Figure 607



Figure 608

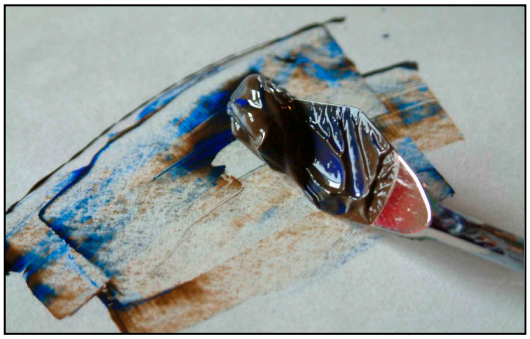
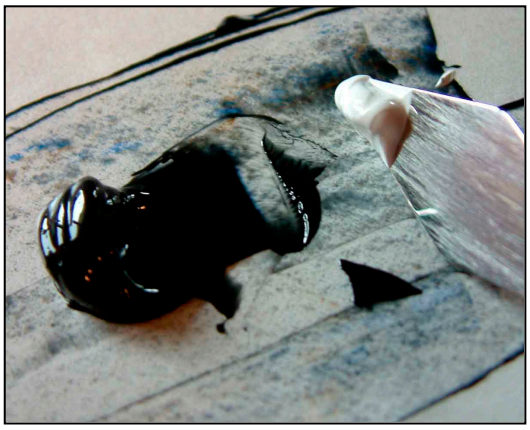


Figure 609



6) Add the scoop of ultramarine blue to the raw umber (Figure 607).

TIP! Don't use paint that is even slightly dry! You'll end up with annoying dried lumps on your canvas. If your paint begins to dry before you have a chance to use it, throw it away and put out (or mix) fresh paint.

7) Use your palette knife to scoop up both colors (Figure 608).

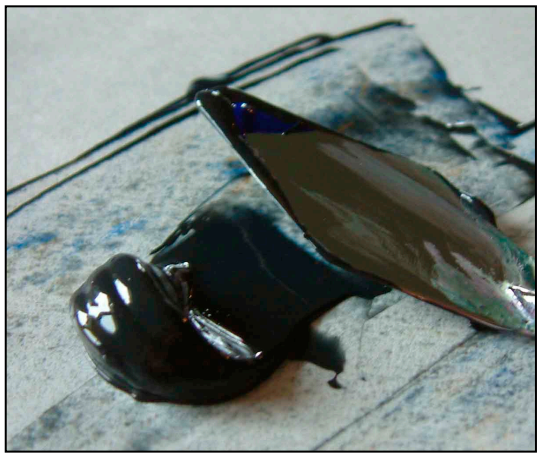
8) Spread the paint back onto the same place on the palette

9) Continue to scoop and spread until the paint becomes a solid black (Figure 609).

If your black looks too blue, mix in a little more raw umber. Conversely, if the black looks too brown, add a little more blue.

TIP! When you are trying to mix a dark color, always begin by mixing base colors together. To lighten a dark color, you add a very tiny dollop of white and mix. If the color is still too dark, add a little more white and mix again. Keep in mind that acrylics become a little darker when they dry.

Figure 610



10) Add small amounts of white to your black until you end up with a dark gray (Figure 610).

In a value scale of ten values from white (1) to black (10), this gray should be a 7.

11) Add this gray color to your wet palette.

Replace the cover to keep it wet.

To avoid confusion between the two palettes – the one for mixing paint is called the *palette* and the other is the *wet palette* (used to store mixed paints to keep them wet).

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MIXING BACKGROUND COLORS

If you goal is to create depth in a painting, you need to understand atmospheric perspective. In short, colors in a background need to have very little contrast – no blacks or dark colors and no whites or light colors. The values of the colors in this background should be middle values from 3 to 7.

Figure 611

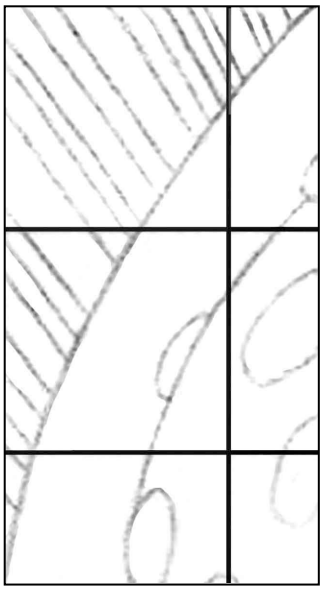
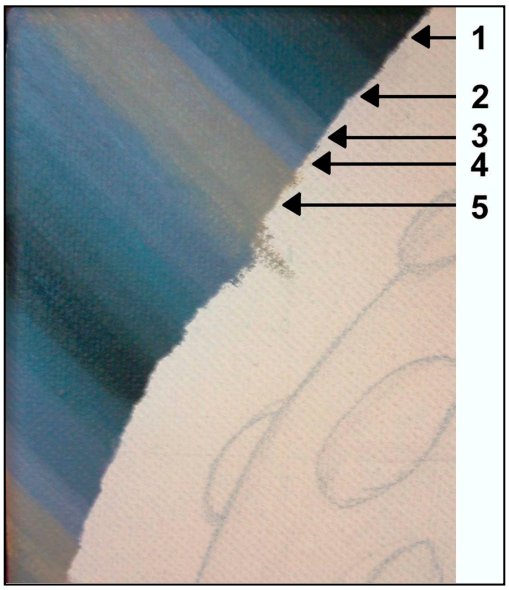


Figure 612



I start by painting a tiny background section in the upper left (Figure 611). You only need five colors (Figure 612) to begin painting.

1) Add base colors to your palette.

You need white, ultramarine blue, raw umber, cerulean blue, yellow ochre, cadmium red, and alizarin crimson.

Figure 613



2) Mix a medium gray.

Make enough so you can use it as a base for four more colors.

Mix the medium gray in the same way you made the dark gray – except you make it lighter by adding a little more white paint. Refer to Figures 613 and 614.

Figure 614



3) Divide your big blob of medium gray into four smaller blobs (Figure 615).

If you aren't used to mixing paints, put three of these small blobs into the wet palette (with the dark gray) so they don't dry. Then you can take your time mixing each color.

I plan to mix my colors quickly, so I have left lots of room on my palette around each blob. As I get each color mixed, I'll add it to the wet palette. To get an idea of the colors I used, examine Figure 616.

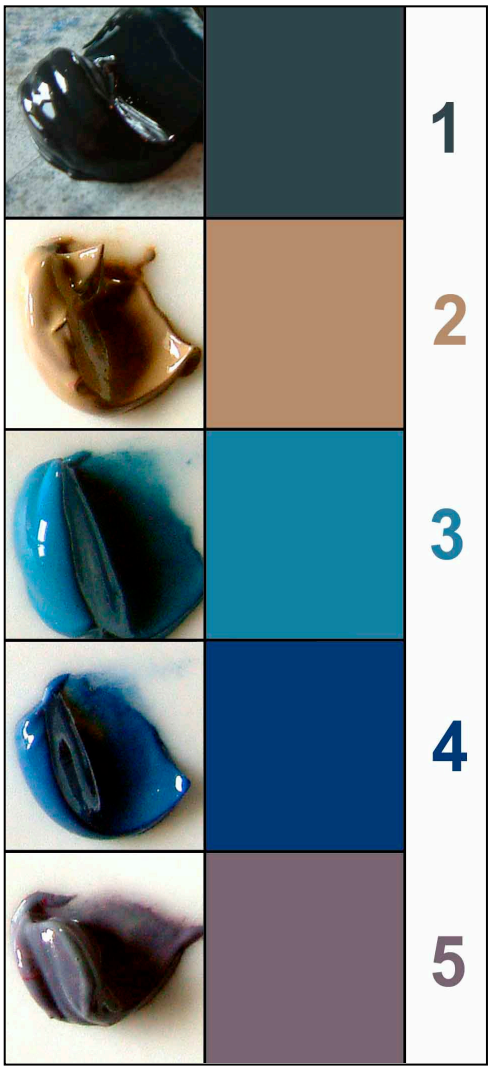
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Figure 615



Color 1: is the dark gray you already mixed and added to your wet palette (Figure 616)

Figure 616



4) Mix four more colors (numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5 in Figure 616).

Each color begins as a blob of the medium gray base. Add only a little paint at a time, mix, and repeat the process until you are happy with the color. For example, if you prefer a lighter yellow, add more white.

Following are the colors I mixed with the medium gray to make colors in Figure 616:

Color 2: Yellow ochre and a little white. (If the color turns green, add a little cadmium red to the mix to turn the color back to a warm yellow).

Color 3: Cerulean blue.

Color 4: Ultramarine blue.

Color 5: Alizarin crimson, ultramarine blue, and a little more white.

5) Add each new color to your wet palette as soon as it's made, and replace the cover.

Your colors are mixed (Figure 617) and you're finally ready to paint!

If you examine my very flat looking blob of dark gray, you can see why you should not add too much water to the wet palette. The paint spreads out and becomes thinner (but still usable).

Figure 617



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PAINTING STRIPES

Finally! The fun part! In this section, I demonstrate the process of painting stripes.

TIP! Remember – your brushes can be ruined if the paint dries on the bristles or inside the lower section of the ferrule. Don't lay a brush down anywhere except in a container of water. If the bristles are soft, lay them almost horizontal in a plate filled with a little water. Stiff bristles are perfectly happy to sit vertically in a jar or cup.

I did this demo on an inexpensive canvas board. I first drew a few lines to mark where the stripes belong (Figure 618). If you are following along with my painting, begin with the stripes in the upper left corner of your canvas.

TIP! As you paint, don't tease the straight lines! First, place the tip of your little finger on the canvas to balance your hand so it doesn't shake. Then, in one stroke, paint a straight edge along the line. When the paint runs out, reload your brush and start where you left off.

1) **Paint each of the stripes with a thin layer of paint.**

   This is an underpainting. Your goal is to cover the stripes with the colors you mixed. If your paint seems thick, wet your brush, and mix it around in the outer edge of a blob of paint.

   As you can see (Figure 619), I used a flat, square brush – worked great for painting straight lines.

Figure 618

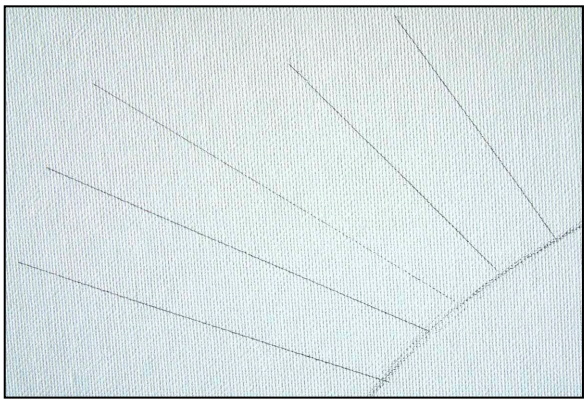


Figure 619

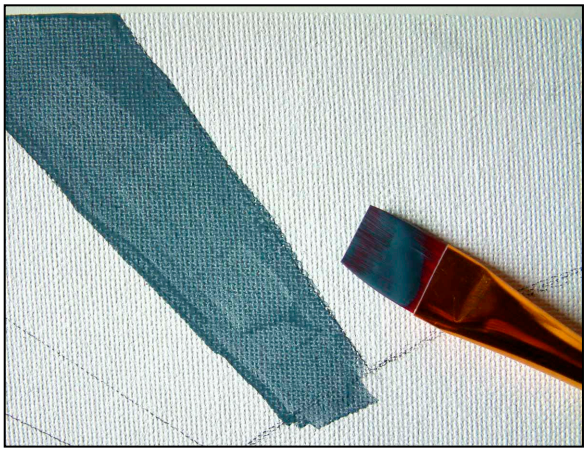


Figure 620



TIP! Turn your canvas upside-down, at an angle, or sideways to easily reach the section you want to paint. Don't touch and smudge the wet paint - work from left to right (or if you are left handed from right to left.

2) **Take a break for a few minutes until the paint dries.**

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3) Add the final layer of paint to the first stripe.

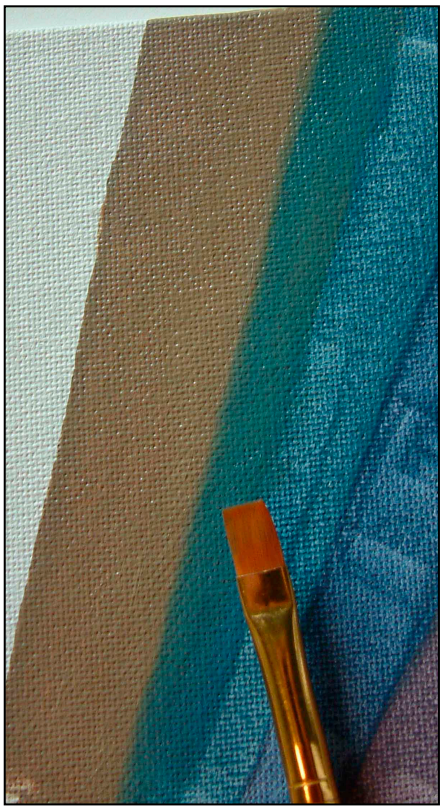
Begin with the outside edge and end beside the next stripe. I used a slightly smaller flat brush. Feel free to arrange the colors of your stripes in any way you prefer.

4) Before the first stripe dries, paint a long thin section of the second color beside the first (Figure 621).

Wipe your brush with a piece of paper towel. (Don't wet it!).

Take your time and run the brush down the seam until you have a soft edge between the stripes (Check out the close-up in Figure 622). Don't press hard – just the weight of the brush! If you need to blend a second (or third) time, make sure you wipe the brush with paper towel after each stroke.

Figure 621



TIP! Avoid hard edges between the stripes. Remember, this is a section of background and as such should be slightly out of focus. To keep edges soft, you need to slightly blend the colors where they meet.

5) Paint the rest of the second stripe and blend it into the third color.

6) Continue painting stripes until the upper left corner is done.

Figure 622

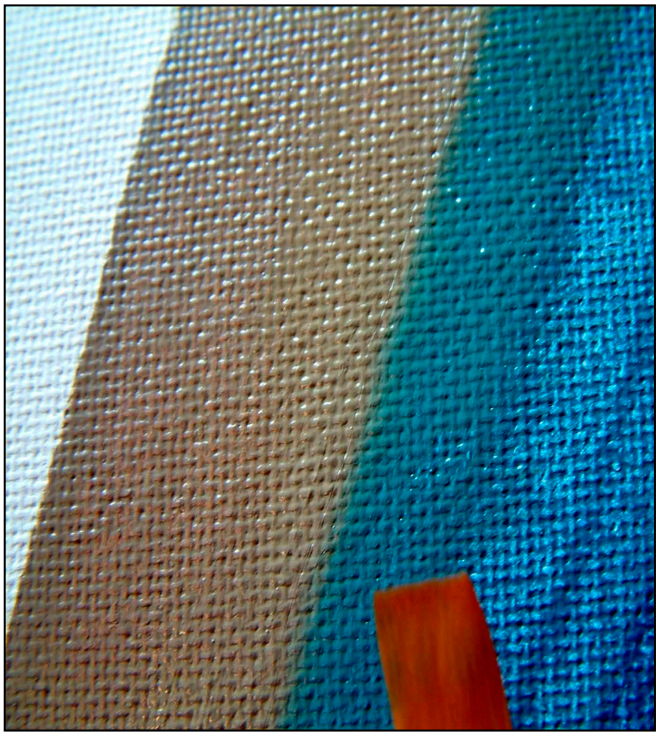
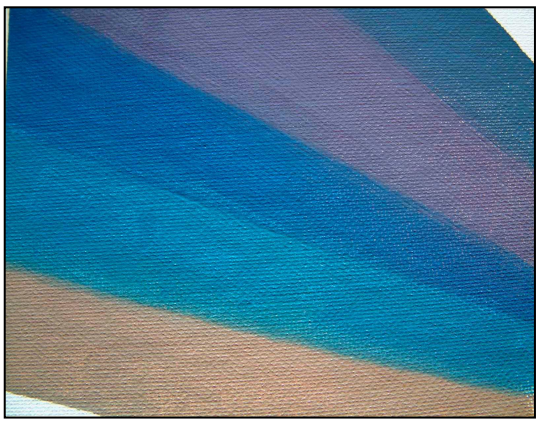


Figure 623



Refer to Figure 623 to see the final version of my demo.

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Figure 624



Figure 624 shows the upper left corner of my actual painting.

7) Paint the stripes in the other two corners.

Figure 625 shows the stripes in the lower right corner. As you can see, I added a few extra colors.

Feel free to mix any colors you want; however, don't use bright colors, or very light or very dark colors in this background.

You'll use brighter colors when you paint the middle ground. When you begin working on the foreground – you get to mix lots of VERY bright colors!

Figure 625

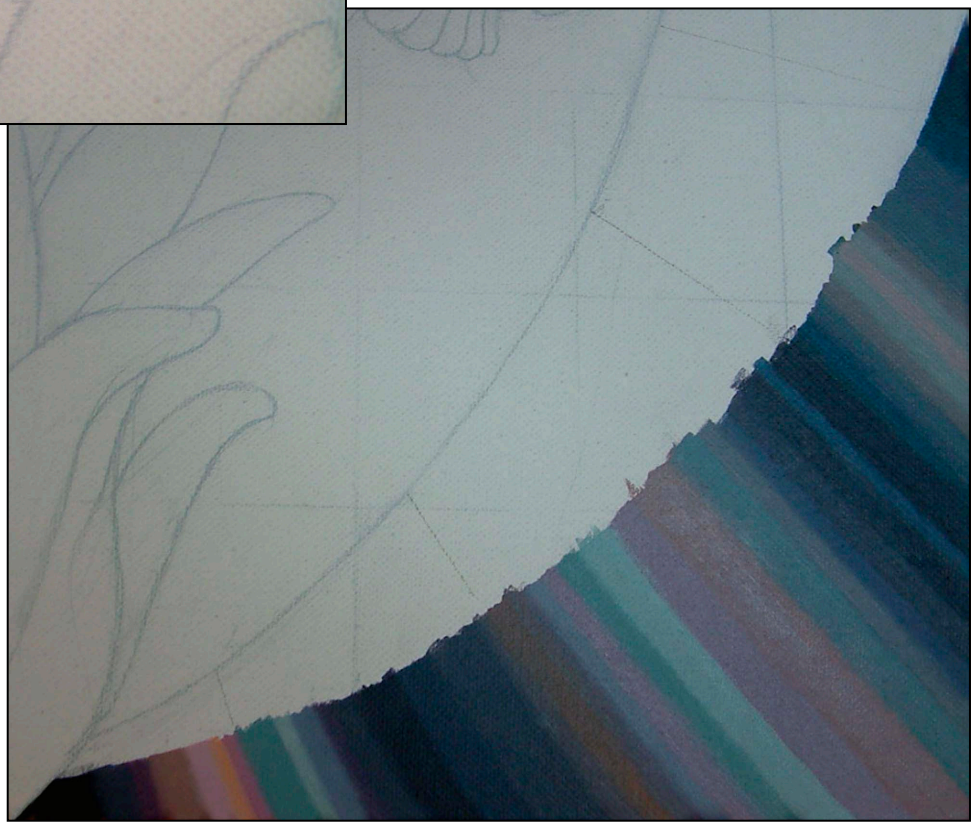


Figure 626 shows the upper right corner of my painting. In Figure 627, you can have a peek at all three corners completed.

The brown and blue sections (that are not stripes) are an underpainting of more sections of the background.

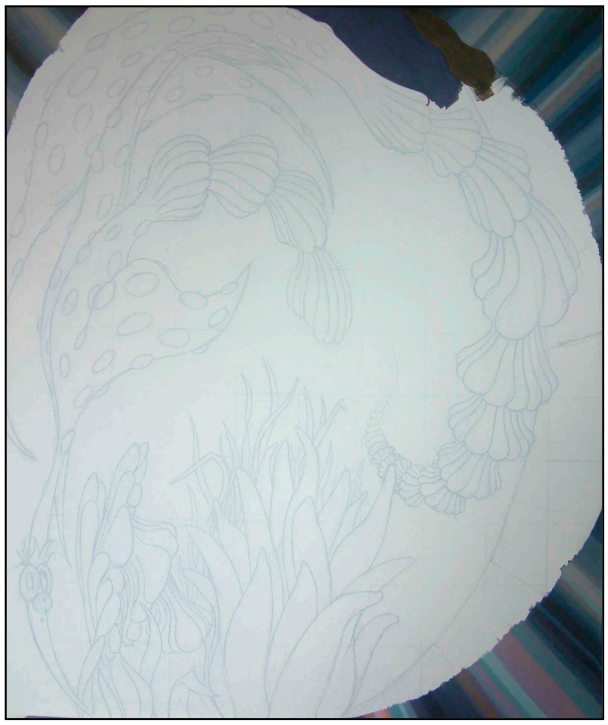
In *Lesson Y07 Painting with Acrylics Part 3 – Painting a Background*, I show you a new way to mix colors and a different method for blending.

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Figure 626



Figure 627





BRENDA HODDINOTT

As a self-educated teacher, visual artist, portraitist, forensic artist (retired), and illustrator, Brenda Hoddinott utilizes diverse art media including her favorites: graphite and paint.

Brenda is the author of *Drawing for Dummies* (Wiley Publishing, Inc., New York, NY) and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Drawing People* (Winner of the Alpha-Penguin Book of the Year Award 2004, Alpha - Pearson Education – Macmillan, Indianapolis, IN). She is currently writing two books on classical drawing.

My philosophy on teaching art is to focus primarily on the enjoyment aspects while gently introducing the technical and academic. Hence, in creating a passion for the subject matter, the quest for knowledge also becomes enjoyable.

>Brenda Hoddinott<

Born in St. John's, Newfoundland, Brenda grew up in the small town of Corner Brook. She developed strong drawing and painting skills through self-directed learning.

During her twenty-five year career as a self-educated civilian forensic artist, various criminal investigation departments have employed Brenda's skills, including the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. In 1992, Brenda was honored with a commendation from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and in 1994, she was awarded a Certificate of Membership from "Forensic Artists International".

In 2003, Brenda retired from her careers as a forensic artist and teacher to work full time writing books and developing her website (Drawspace.com). This site is respected as a resource for fine art educators, home schooling programs, and educational facilities throughout the world.

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