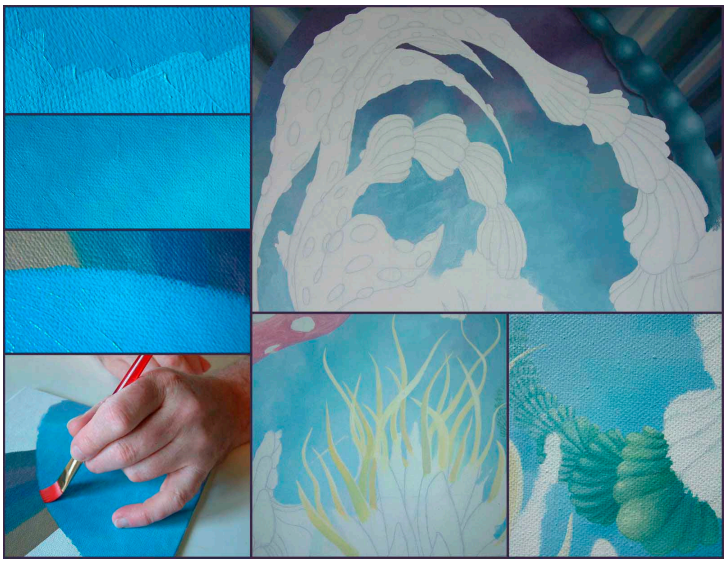
PAINTING WITH ACRYLICS: PART 3

THE BACKGROUND

Brenda Hoddinott



Y07 ADVANCED: CREATING IN COLOR

This is the third in a series of six lessons on painting with acrylics. In this lesson, you learn how to do an underpainting, blend wet paint into dry paint without leaving a hard edge, blend paints so colors graduate smoothly into one another. Finally, you put these new skills into action by completing the background of your own painting in progress.

This lesson is divided into the following four sections:

- **Doing an Underpainting**
- **Painting on the Edge**
- **Blending Colors Together**
- **Completing the Background**

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.

12 PAGES – 29 ILLUSTRATIONS

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As an aside, the demonstrations in the first three sections of this lesson are simply examples of painting techniques, and not a part of my actual painting. You get back to working on your painting in the final section of this lesson, *Completing the Background*.

DOING AN UNDERPAINTING

In this section, you mix five colors and choose one to do an underpainting of a section of background (adjacent to the stripes you painted in Lesson Y06).

1) Mix any five colors that are close in color and value.

I mixed the colors in Figure 701 with cerulean blue, ultramarine blue, alizarin crimson, and white. Following is a basic recipe for these colors based on the first paint color named being the largest quantity in the mix. For example, for Color 1, I used mostly cerulean blue with a small amount of white, and a very tiny amount of ultramarine blue.

- ✓ **Color 1**: Cerulean blue, white, ultramarine blue
- ✓ **Color 2:** Cerulean blue, white
- ✓ **Color 3**: White, cerulean blue
- ✓ **Color 4:** Cerulean blue, ultramarine blue, white, alizarin crimson
- ✓ **Color 5:** Cerulean blue, ultramarine blue, alizarin crimson, white

Figure 701



Figure 702



2) Use a middle value (Color 2 or 4) to do an underpainting.

Use a fairly large brush and make sure the paint is thin.

I dip my brush in water before I dip it in the paint. Then, I swish the wet brush around in a tiny bit of paint until the mixture is thin.

First, paint along the curved edge of your stripes carefully (Figure 702). Then use little x-shaped strokes (Figure 703) to finish the underpainting (Figure 704).

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Figure 703

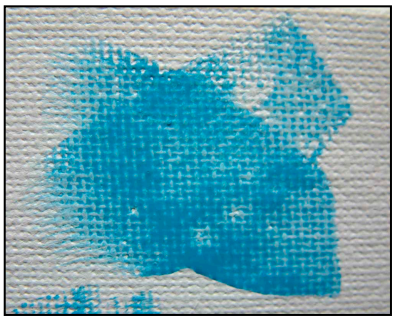
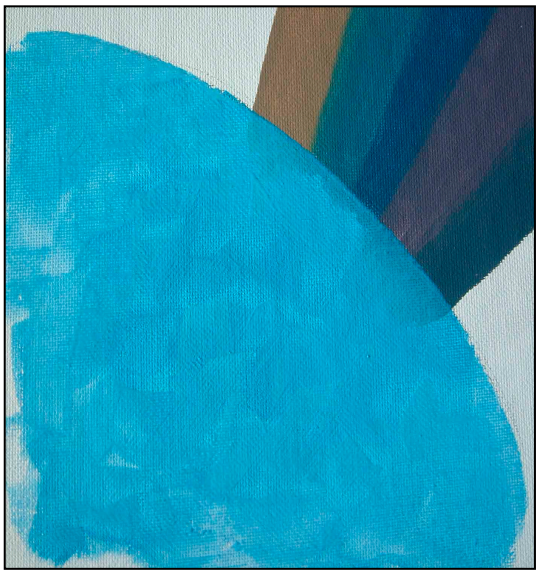


Figure 704



PAINTING ON THE EDGE

In this section, I show you how to blend wet paint into dry paint without leaving a hard edge.

3) Paint along the edge of the stripes with any one of your colors.

Wait until the underpainting is completely dry. Do not thin the paint. If your brush is still wet, dry it with paper towel before dipping it in the paint.

Again, make little x-shapes with your brush. Any type of brush stroke works – but eventually (as you begin to developing your own style) you will prefer a specific technique.

Avoid painting a sharp edge where the paint meets the edge of the stripes. Hard edges defeat the goal of creating a softly blended background.

Figure 705

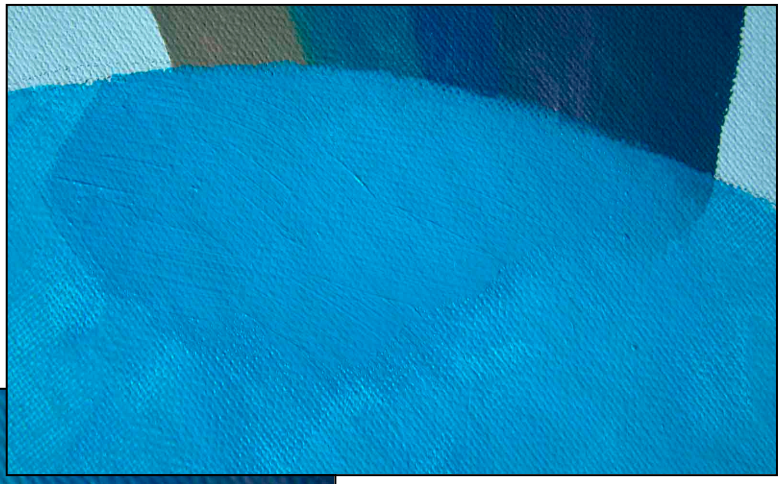
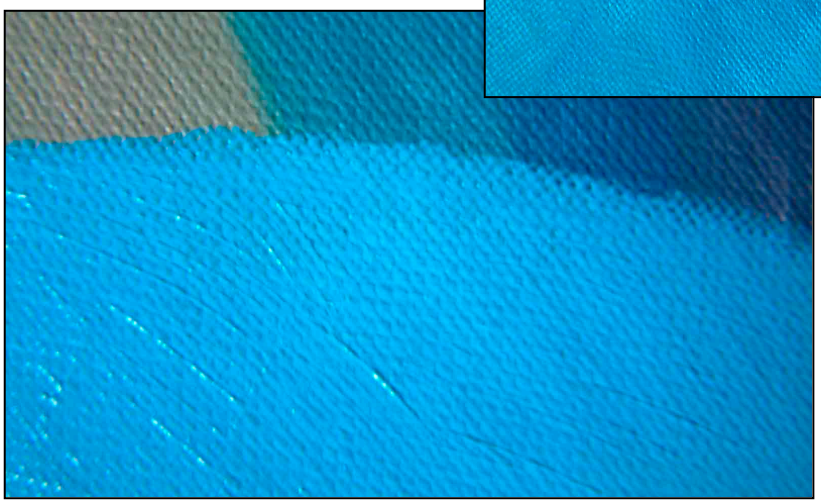


Figure 706



Examine the close-up view of where the solid color meets the edge of the stripes (Figure 706).

The blue paint creeps ever so slightly into the stripes. From a distance the edge appears soft.

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It's perfectly ok to see tiny unblended ridges of paint at the outer edges of a brushstroke. If you want your paint more blended, simply use a filbert brush (Figure 707) instead of a flat. (Keep in mind that I'm using cheap dollar-store brushes.)

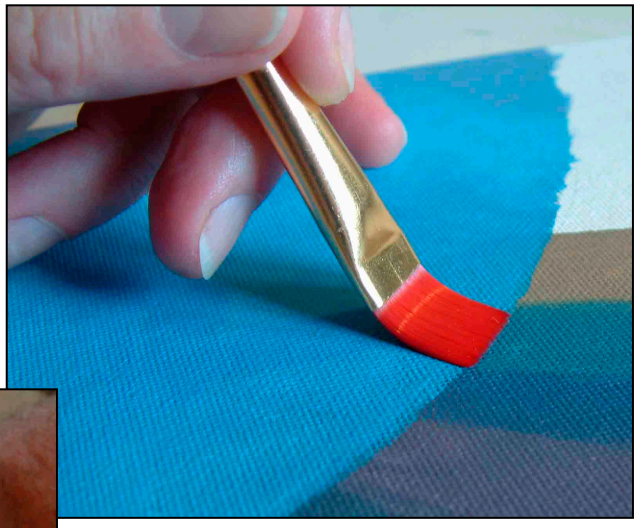
Figure 707



However, if you end up with a blob of paint on the edge (where the wet paint meets the dry) that you don't like:

1. Dry your brush with paper towel (do not wash it), or use a clean, dry brush (preferably a flat as in Figure 708).
2. Carefully place the wide part of the brush on the blob of paint.
3. Pull the blob back into the wet paint.

Figure 708



Most people's hands become shaky trying to do fine details with a paintbrush.

When you need a steady touch, use you little finger to balance your hand (as in Figure 709).

Figure 709



(The wonderful hand model is John Percy)

BLENDING COLORS TOGETHER

In this section, I show you how to blend acrylic paints (while they are still wet) so colors graduate smoothly into one another.

4) Continue painting a small section of the same color outward from the striped edge.

Leave room to add sections of the other four colors.

5) Wipe your brush with clean paper towel (do not wet the brush).

6) Dip your brush into the next color you want to use.

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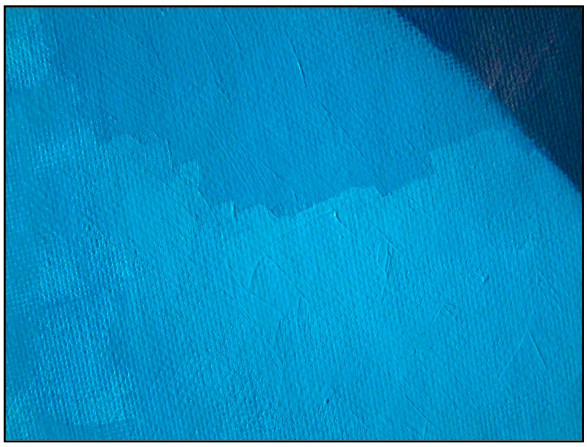
7) Paint along the edges of the wet paint with the new color.

Work on a tiny section at a time, so you have plenty of time to blend before the paint dries.

Apply the new color slightly into and over the edges of the first color so the underpainting is showing.

If you closely examine Figures 710 and 711, you can see where the darker blue ends and the lighter blue (the new color) begins.

Figure 710



8) Wipe your brush with clean paper towel again.

9) Use short x-shaped strokes to blend the two colors together in the small sections where they meet.

Needless to say, both colors have to still be wet in order to blend.

If by chance the first color is already dry, add more of it along the edges where you will be adding the new color.

Then, blend them together. I often find it easier to blend in the same direction as the line where the two colors meet.

However, with practice, you'll find the technique that works best for you.

Figure 711

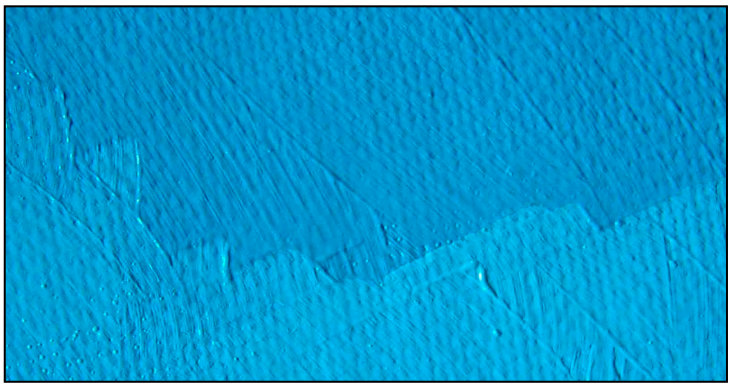
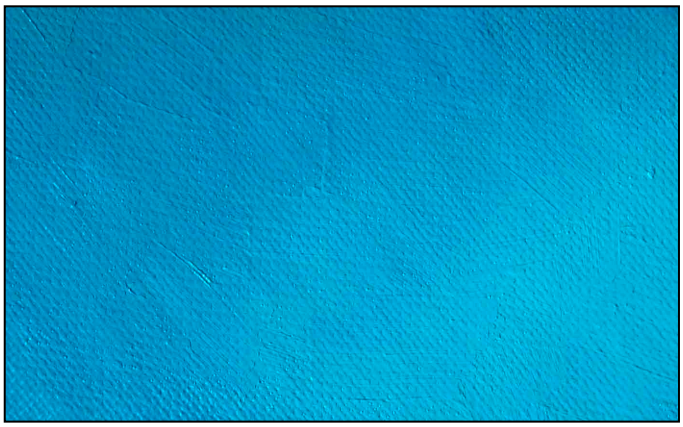


Figure 712



Use a fairly soft brush and don't press too hard. You want to gently blend the colors without moving very much of the paint.

10) Finish painting a shape with this color before you add the third color.

11) Continue painting shapes of different colors and blending them into one another.

Use the various techniques discussed in this section.

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COMPLETING THE BACKGROUND

I've decided to call this painting "Playing with Acrylics".

In this section, your goal is to catch up with me by completing the background.

You can mix any colors you want. However, try to come as close as possible to the values of the colors I used.

Begin in the upper left section of the painting. Refer to Figures 713 to 716.

Figure 713

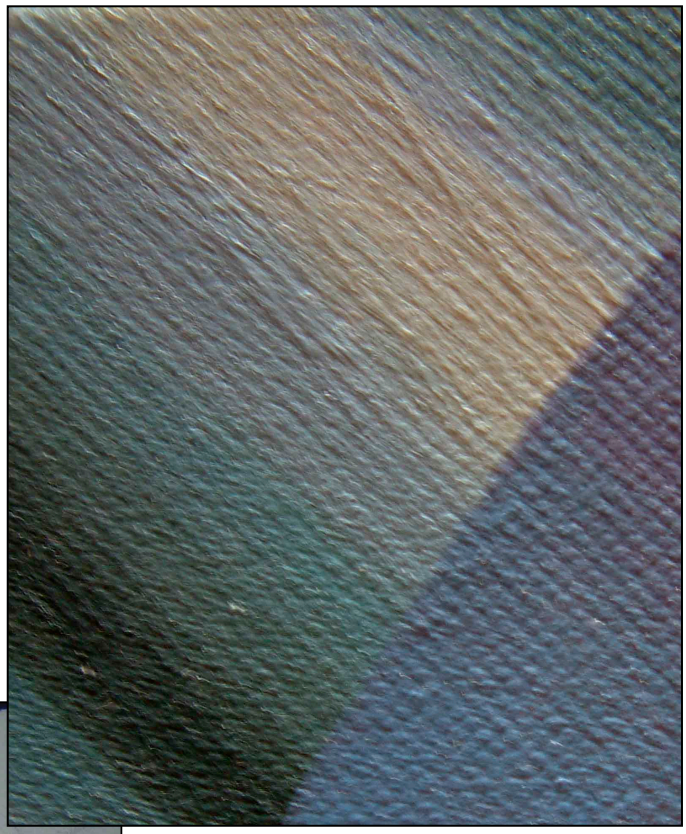


Figure 714



You don't have to paint with the canvas right-side-up. Rotate your canvas as you work to more easily reach some sections.

Keep in mind that the subject of this painting is not based in reality. Hence, feel free to change anything you want.

For example, you can completely ignore the bumpy blue-green form on the upper right (Figure 715) that separates the stripes from the rest of the background.

Maybe, you'd prefer to add more background or paint something else in its place. Remember, you learn by making mistakes - if you don't like something, you can just paint over it.

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Also, remember to do an underpainting before you add the final colors – unless of course, you prefer to see sections of the white canvas showing through (and lots of artists do prefer this).

Figure 715



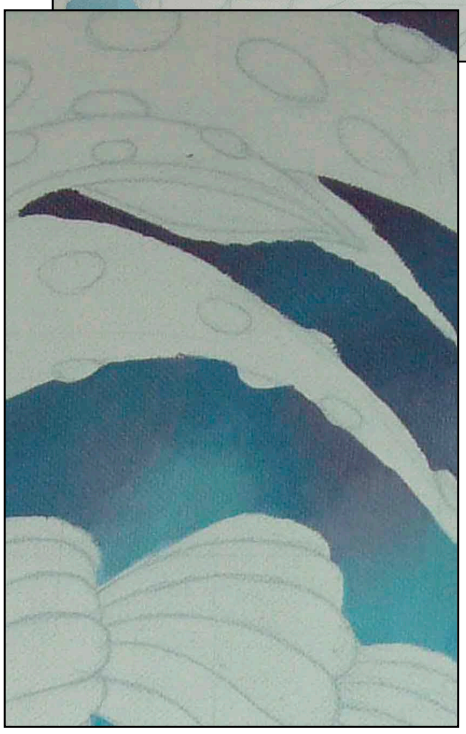


Figure 716

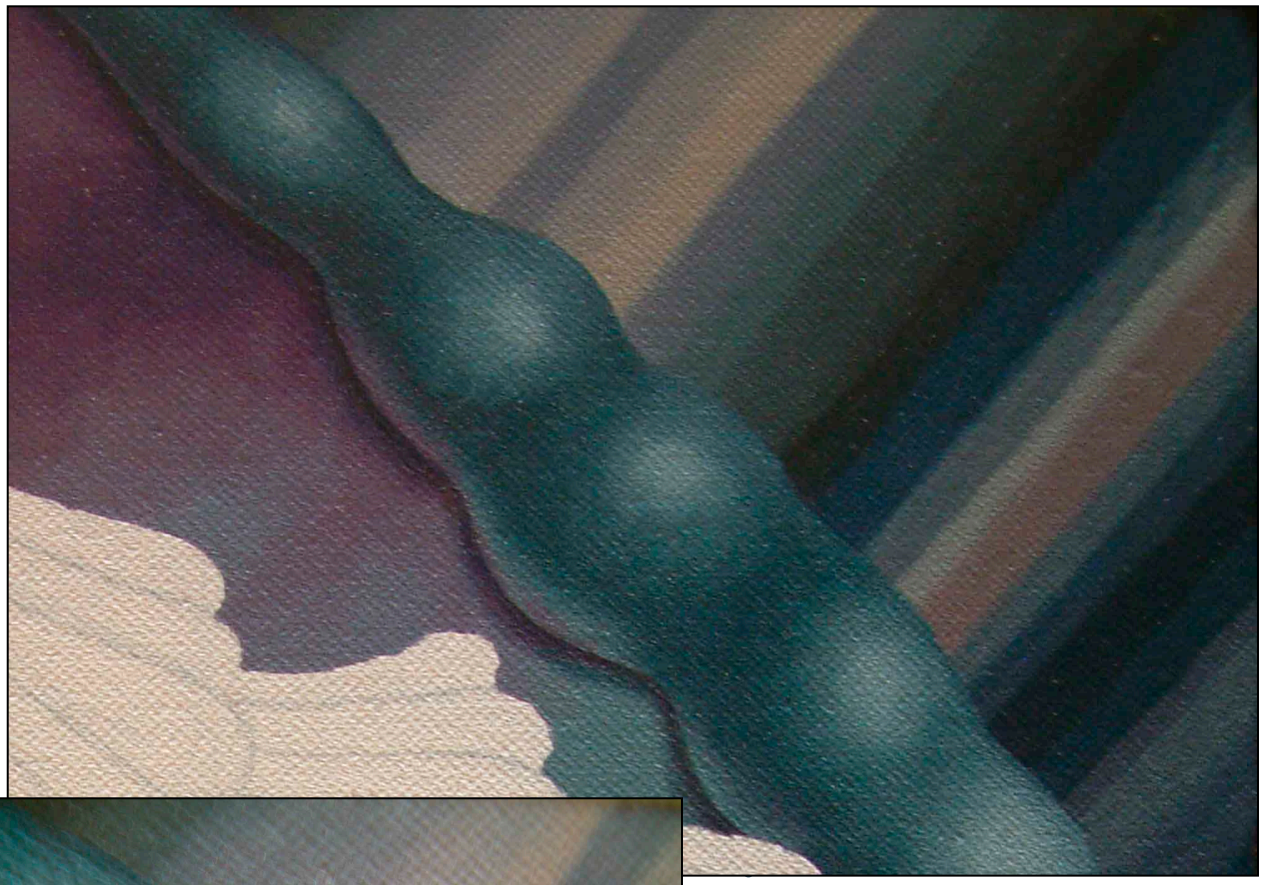
Figure 717



Refer to Figures 716 to 722 as you paint the background sections on the upper right.

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Figure 718



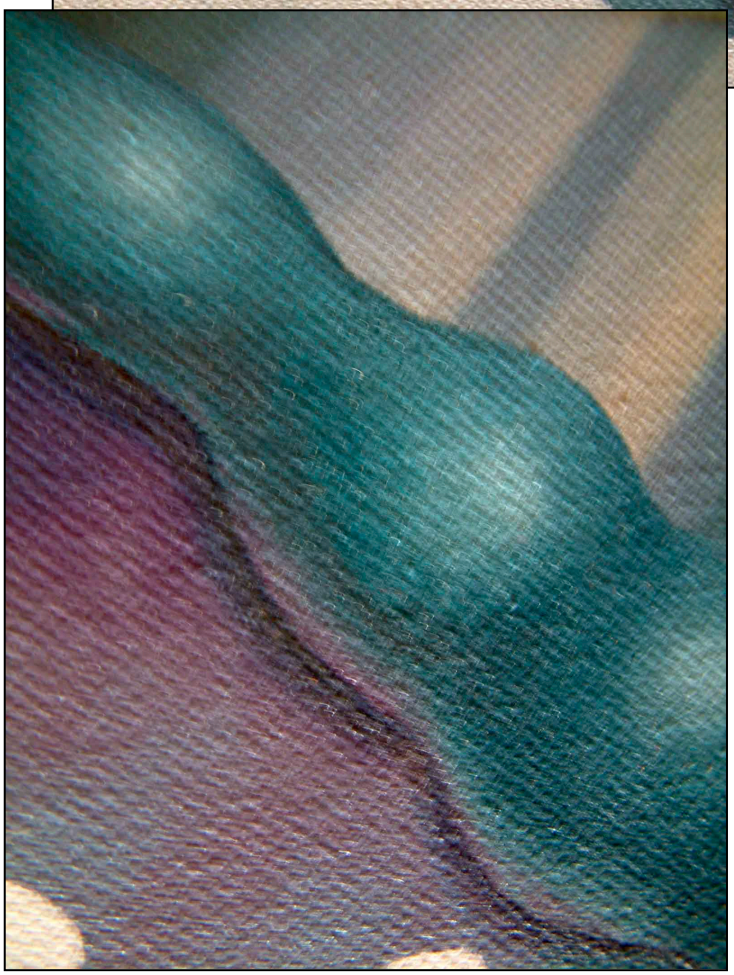


Figure 719

Oh, and if you do plan to paint the bumpy, blue-green form, it's not nearly as difficult as you might think.

You apply and blend the colors together in the exact same way. The only difference is that you need to plan where to paint the light and dark values in much the same way as you draw a three-dimensional sphere.

According to an upper right frontal light source, the lightest value is the highlight, and the darkest values are in the shadow sections.

Cast shadows are visible on the background, and the purple of the background reflects light onto the left sides of the forms.

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Figure 720



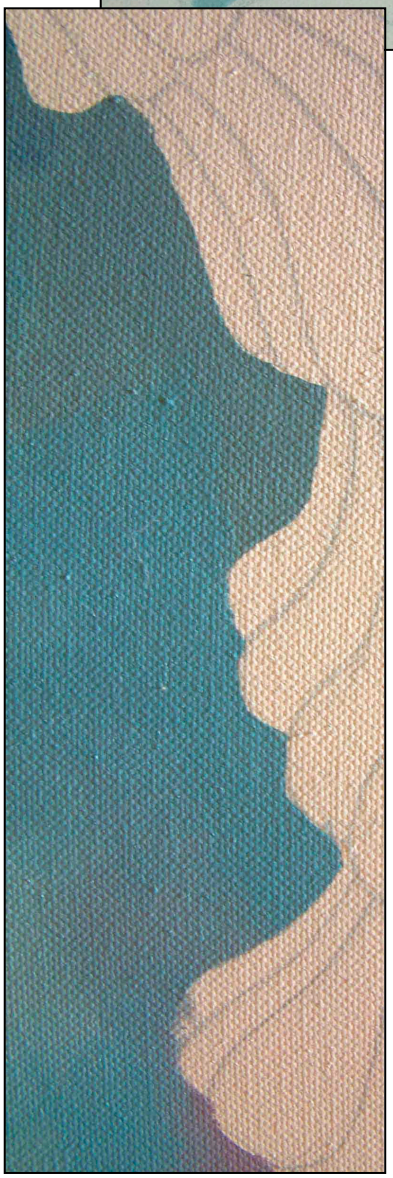
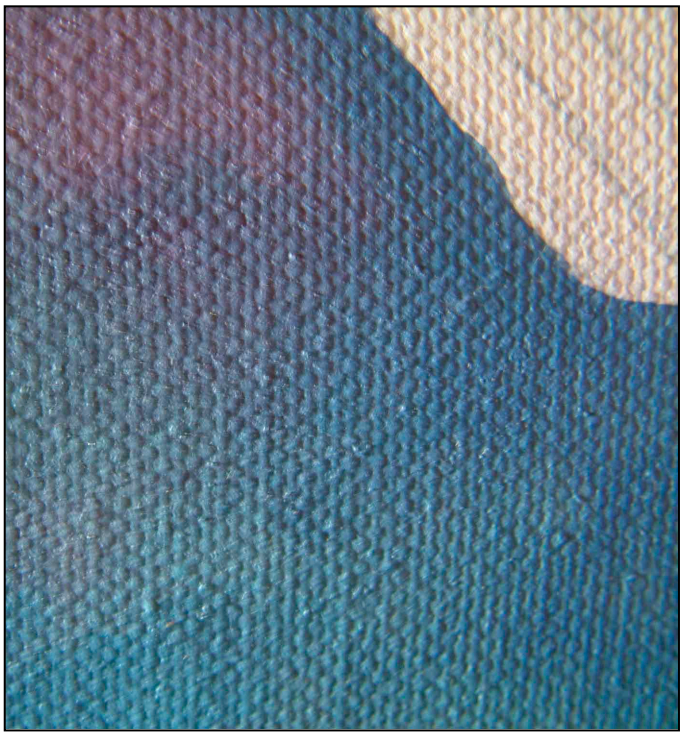


Figure 721

Figure 722

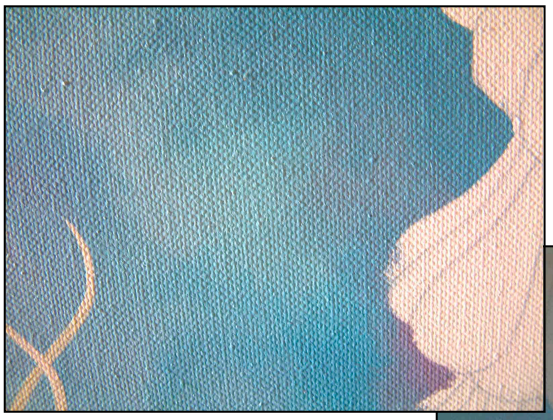


Continue painting the background sections as you move toward the lower half of the painting. Refer to Figures 723 to 729.

The colors that you choose are not as important as their values. Try and mix colors that are dark in value for the darker sections, and light in value for the light areas.

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Figure 723



The thin, pale yellow grass that grows up toward the middle of the painting is painted with a brush I call a liner (Figure 725).

Figure 724

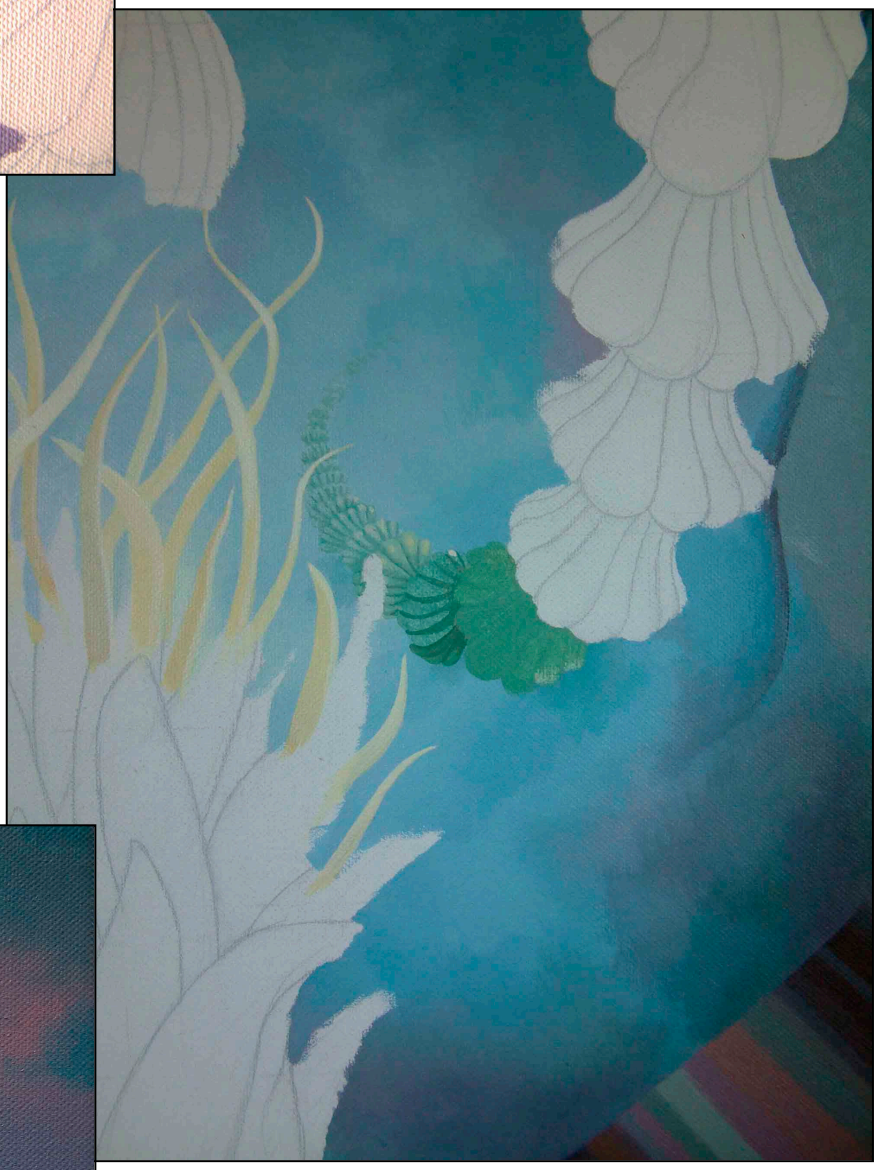
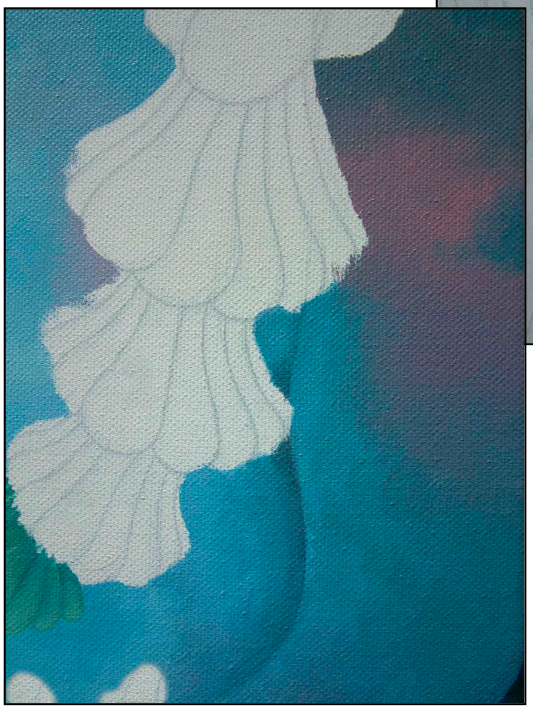


Figure 725



Your paint needs to be a little thinner when you use this type of brush. Hence, you may need to add an extra layer of paint.

Figure 726



You may notice a few tiny shapes in the background that I painted white so I can remember where I want to add extras in the middle ground.

Look at the two small white sections in the lower left of Figure 726. They were added after I painted the background (Figure 724).

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Figure 727



Just ignore the underpainting (pink) in a few places. At this stage I'm getting bored with the background and looking forward to painting all the fun stuff in the middle ground.

In the next lesson, you finally get to use bright colors to paint some rather unusual characters!

Figure 728

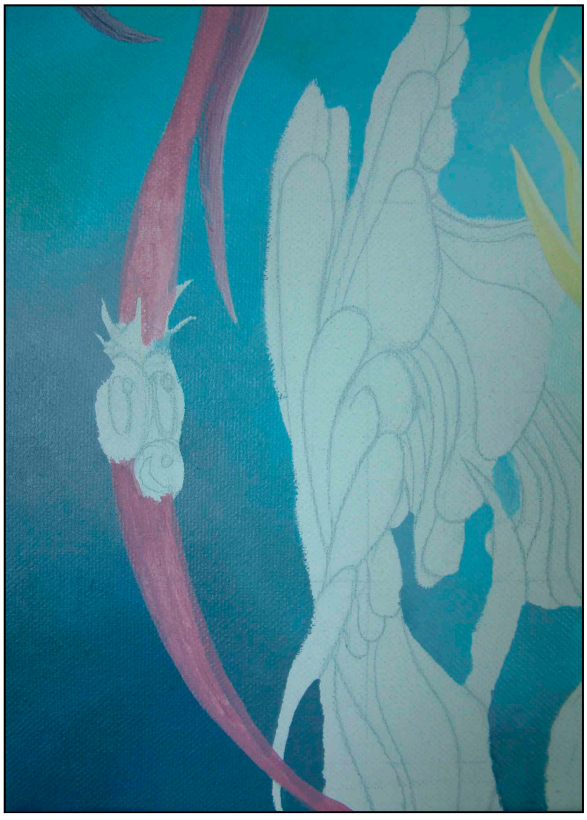


Figure 729



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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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