

Whale of a Time

July 2014
Lennox Head

Workshop Notes

A little introduction about setting yourself up right - mainly, having a big palette which you can do your “calculations” on, means you make your mistakes there, rather than on your canvas.

We talked a little bit about how today is going to be about not only investigating the elements & anatomy of a whale, and painting a whale, but also will secondarily be investigating the process of making a painting as a whole. That is, breaking each part down into manageable pieces.



We then took our already prepped canvas with a reddish pinky ground (using Permanent Alizarine & White), and using chalk, we investigated the “elements” of a whale.

We dissected a whale, and broke it up into fins, flippers, body, throat etc.

We drew the tail so we could understand the shape of it and the way that it fitted onto the whale. We then looked at the pectoral fins, and investigated the shape of them, and also discussed how flexible they were.

We had a good look at the “throat” of the whale, and observed the “pleats” in its throat, which allow it to expand and contract. We also noticed that whales are quite badly battered by their life in the ocean i.e. covered in barnacles and scratches from being close to their friends who are also covered in barnacles!

Using our reference pics, we sketched whales in various positions, with a view to deciding on and chalking in our whale for the painting today. We took a bit of time to understand how great chalk is for sketching and moving things around, but also how a lot of this early process is “finding the lines” and refining the shapes.

We decided on our whales, sketched them in with chalk, and placed our flippers and tails exactly where we wanted them.



We discussed that the whale's tail was further away, and therefore would have more water between us and it. Water has a colour, therefore we had to create the illusion of the tail being further away.

We broke the colour of the whale into 6 increments (to create the illusion of depth). Top and bottom "halves" of the whale, and then into thirds (vertically-ish) to represent the closest to furthest parts of the whale.



We then mixed our colours with these "sections" in mind.

We started first with the closest & darkest shadow parts of the whale using a mixture of Burnt Umber, Dioxazine Purple and (a small amount of) Pthalo Blue. We talked about how the first colour lost in the water is red, meaning we can use Dioxazine Purple (which has red in it) in the closest parts of the whale, helping to establish the illusion of the whale coming forward.

Progressing further away we added more Pthalo Blue to this mix and painted in the darkest shadow areas in this next furthest section.

The tail area (or furthest area away from the viewer) used the same colour with more Pthalo Blue added.

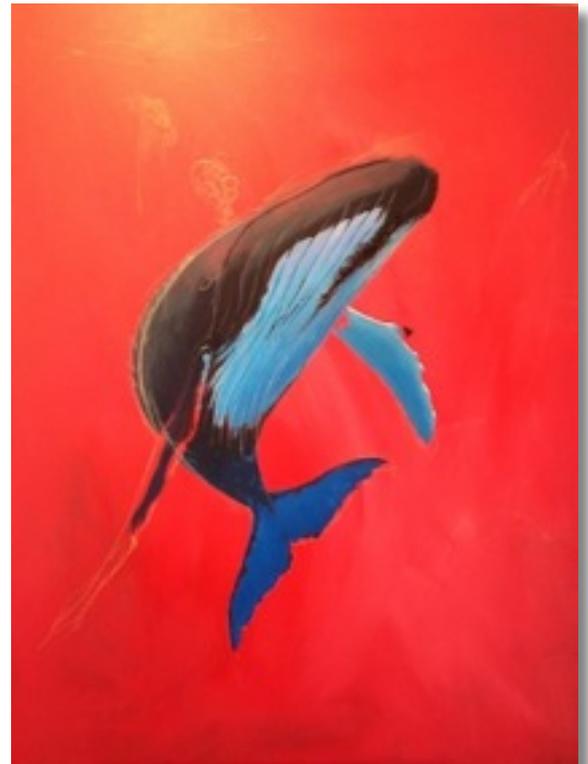
Then we broke those three increments of colour up, and added White to each one, painting the upper surfaces of the whale (to create the impression of the sunlight hitting the upper surfaces of the whale).

We then looked at the white parts of the whale (tails & flippers, and throat for some). The furthest away “white” areas were painted using a mix of Pthalo Blue & White (ie the tail). As the white

areas came forward, more white was added to this mix. In the closest “white” areas (for example the throat right near the jawline) a small amount of Dioxazine Purple was added to this mix (warming it up and therefore bringing it forward too).

Mixing as darker colour as possible (using Dioxazine Purple, Burnt Umber, touch of Pthalo Blue), we painted in the throat lines, and eye. We then painted the white parts. These are scars, barnacles, and markings on the tail and body that are unique to each whale. We added Pthalo Blue to the marks that were furthest away, to push them away. We added less Pthalo Blue to the white markings that were closer. Then we added and built up the highlights with a very very thin glaze of almost pure white to create the pleated throat look.

We painted the nodules on the nose and the detail around the eyes, and added highlights.



We mixed a combination of Burnt Umber and White and, using dry brush technique represented the areas closest to the light, along the jawline and eye socket, and up over the back closest to the light. We added more barnacles with this colour and built up the shadow areas there too.

We mixed a glaze of Pthalo Blue, and applied it under the throat and on the tail to push the deeper bits even further away. This was done very thinly and we built up the glaze slowly, with multiple coats.

We then painted the nearest flipper. This was almost pure white. We used Pthalo Blue to create depth & shape in them and almost pure White to bring any lumps forward.

We painted in the water.

The process started as painting a band about a third of the way up the painting (using a mixture of Pthalo Blue & White), and then added to this mix a touch of Cadmium Yellow Light, and White. We painted this in a band moving towards the top of the canvas. From there, we added more Cadmium Yellow Light and White.



We created the illusion of the water becoming deeper in the bottom of the canvas by mixing up our Pthalo Blue & touch of White mix again, but adding French Ultramarine Blue to this mix.

When we painted around the whale, we left flecks of the red underpainting showing here and there.

We ran out of time then, but some stayed and represented the surface. We did this by painting the sky (French Ultramarine Blue + White) shining through the top of the water. We added White as we moved into the top left corner, and then loosely added some greeny-gold outlines to our sky colour.

Thanks to this lovely group for a great day in Lennox!

For support material about what you learnt on the weekend, check out these pages:

www.coolwaterphoto.photoshelter.com/gallery/Humpback-Whale/G0000tFK2ptxFns/C00009wjSx5xhBUs

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/ocean-landscapes.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/color-mixing-guide.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/perspective-in-painting.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/how-to-paint-water.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/painting-waves.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/gradation.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/brush-technique.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/acrylic-glazing.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/shadow-painting.html

www.explore-acrylic-painting.com/support-files/aa013defaultsettingtropicalwater.pdf

Please subscribe to [Acrylics Anonymous](#) if you haven't already done so!!!

We have a new V-log coming out soon - very exciting! A dolphin family downloadable tutorial! This is a lovely muted and moody underwater scene. Let me know if you're interested in pre-ordering a copy of this :) 20% discount for pre-order.

and check out these video clips! (subscribe to our [Youtube channel](#) for all the latest clips):

Painting Waves - Perspective in Whitewash:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TDvlwo_e9JI

Acrylic Painting Techniques - Reflections in Whitewash:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUDJHY9h9fA>

Brush Technique:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=icWYYJHJFVc>

How to Paint Water - Refraction:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzCGPAUXJOg>

Acrylic Painting Techniques - Glazing:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=spJETxwJsdK>

