

DAVE WHITE: ACRYLIC SEASCAPES

Friday 18th October 2019



Dave White began the evening by saying “I paint for a living”. It was clear from the way that he had set out his work and his books that he makes a good living from his art. He exhibits annually at Crufts Dog Show where on a good year he can have £4,000 worth of commissions. He explained that he was a finance director for 30 years with Flagship which runs Navy Training Centres until fourteen years ago he discovered he could paint when he helped his daughter with her project “Moving Water” which she had to paint for school.

Before beginning the Demonstration he said he wanted to give us a few tips in case we want to paint for a living, to which someone in the room responded, “A bit late for that!” Dave White stressed it is never too late. He now lives in the New Forest and he has developed a new career which has included becoming the Artist in Residence at Rhinefield House Hotel near Lyndhurst. The professional-looking display boards enable him to display a good range of his work and gain commissions as a result. He has written several art books; his book “Sea & Sky” has sold over 25,000 copies.



Dave White said he would start by painting the sky, he would then make a start on the sand and sea. He would use the second half of the evening creating the rising wave, ‘the fancy stuff’. To begin it is essential to have a good background. He had prepared a graduated background as this gives aerial perspective, the technique of representing distant objects as fainter which gives a sense of depth.

He asked the room “What are the problems when starting a painting?” One problem with acrylics is that the paint dries too quickly. Since acrylics are plastic they are water repellent so three coats of acrylic colour of any kind will help to slow down the acrylic drying time. Gesso does the reverse.

What size should the painting be? Normally he wants to know where the painting is going to hang as the size of the wall will determine the size and shape of a painting. This evening he is working on a 3’ x 2’ canvas (36” x 24”).



Where to set the horizon? He works on the Golden Ratio. He will set the horizon on a third. He will also set the vanishing point on another third. The focal point is usually the height of the viewer's eyes. Using linear perspective, he drew a grid on the canvas. He will set the clouds using these lines as guides. The important thing to remember is that cloud shapes are never repeated especially with cumulus clouds. He will add more depth of colour as the clouds get bigger and closer.

He asked the room to name three country shapes. He was given Africa, Australia, New Zealand. After discussing the colour of the base of a cloud it was agreed that the shadow is a purple/grey colour. He used Cadmium Deep Red and Ultramarine Blue to create this purple. Then he added Yellow Ochre to give it a little warmth. Too much would turn green. He advised everyone to make colour wheels because different manufacturers colours will produce very different results. He had at least six colour wheels with him that he showed us.



Next he had to decide where the light source was going to be in the painting. He determined it would come from the right. On this basis he began to add white paint to the clouds. Then it was time to paint the beach. He used Yellow Ochre, Cadmium Scarlet and Cadmium Yellow to create an orange and Burnt Sienna. Again he took his brush strokes towards the vanishing point blending the colours but allowing some streaks to remain.

Painting water becomes an issue of opacity versus transparency. Ultramarine blue in most brands of paint is a transparent colour. Hookers Green is opaque as is yellow ochre. He mixed a deep green/blue colour and painted this across the canvas between the sky and the newly painted beach. He then painted some small white waves in the sea taking account of the vanishing point and the lines of perspective. By diluting some of the sea colour it becomes transparent and allows the beach colour to show through the sea colour to give the impression it is moving up the beach.



After the break it is time to create the rising wave. He points out that the shadow of white waves are also a purple/grey colour while the tip of the wave is transparent. He often uses his finger to blend the colours. He likes to use Lemon Yellow to create the transparency at the top of the wave blending it with the blue. The yellow makes it appear to glow. The chalk line marks the vanishing point and the crest of the main wave will be placed according to the lines of perspective.

Watercolour brushes work best for carrying water and paint. He

does not like acrylic brushes and uses synthetic watercolour brushes instead. Acrylic paint dries quickly so he uses yogurt pots in which to mix his paint. If these are turned upside down the oil-based plastic of the yogurt pot keeps out the oxygen and stops the paint from drying up too quickly. When it is dry it can be peeled off easily. He will use a small brush to create the foam and his fingers to blend but when it comes to splattering the paint he uses an acrylic brush. It is important to get the right mix of water to paint. He can use another paintbrush against the splatter brush or a sculpting knife which will create a different splatter shape.

Finally, he showed how he creates the foam in the water climbing the beach. He uses a grey white and makes sure he takes it in lines towards the vanishing point again. He adds a hole in the foam and ensures that he creates a different shaped hole in another line of foam. It is worth remembering that the shadow of the rising wave will fall on some of the foam so there should be darker shades of white to give this impression. He did not have time to add stones on the beach but if he had these would have followed the lines of perspective again and help to draw the viewer into the painting. Below is one of the paintings he had on display that clearly demonstrates everything he had been showing us.

