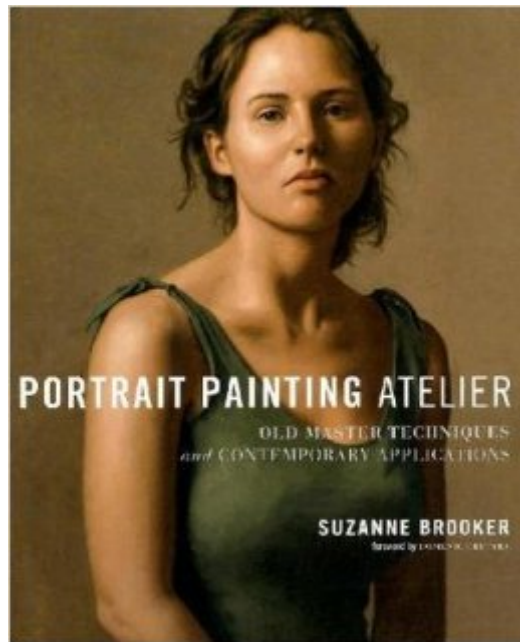


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Portrait Painting Atelier: Old Master Techniques And Contemporary Applications



Synopsis

The art of portraiture approached its apex during the sixteenth century in Europe with the discovery of oil painting when the old masters developed and refined techniques that remain unsurpassed to this day. The ascendance of nonrepresentational art in the middle of the twentieth century displaced these venerable skills, especially in academic art circles. Fortunately for aspiring artists—today who wish to learn the methods that allowed the Old Masters to achieve the luminous color and subtle tonalities so characteristic of their work, this knowledge has been preserved in hundreds of small traditional painting ateliers that persevered in the old ways in this country and throughout the world. Coming out of this dedicated movement, Portrait Painting Atelier is an essential resource for an art community still recovering from a time when solid instruction in art technique was unavailable in our schools. Of particular value here is a demonstration of the Old Masters'™ technique of layering paint over a toned-ground surface, a process that builds from the transparent dark areas to the more densely painted lights. This method unifies the entire painting, creating a beautiful glow that illuminates skin tones and softly blends all the color tones. Readers will also find valuable instruction in paint mediums from classic oil-based to alkyd-based, the interactive principles of composition and photograph-based composition, and the anatomy of the human face and the key relationships among its features. Richly illustrated with the work of preeminent masters such as Millet, Géricault, and van Gogh, as well as some of today's™ leading portrait artists—and featuring seven detailed step-by-step portrait demonstrations—Portrait Painting Atelier is the first book in many years to so comprehensively cover the concepts and techniques of traditional portraiture.

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Customer Reviews

The author presents a coherent approach to painting in traditional "Old Master" style. To absorb the wealth of valuable information takes several readings, as well as working through the exercises and much practice. Techniques are clearly described. There are some impressive examples of painted portraits -- but not by the author. The step by step demos she herself does are not inspiring and result in stiff, "tight", uninteresting images. This book will be most useful to painters who have some experience and have already encountered the technical issues the author describes. Beginners will probably find it overwhelming. Incidentally, the author's mentor Domenic Cretara, who supplies the introduction, is a modern master in his own right, and his work is well worth looking up online.

This book contains some valuable information and tips on this difficult topic. The skin tone colour mixing part is especially helpful, and the illustrations are informative and high quality. I really like the way it goes into detail on different elements of the face, on application of paint and on toned grounds. Nevertheless, this book suffers from the same problem as all of them do. The step by step demonstrations are all made by the author/artist himself. This results in a lot of demonstrations basically using the same approach in different variations. I would really like to see a book of this kind with demonstrations by different artists, displaying different approaches and techniques! If you are very interested in glazing techniques, this should really satisfy you, since all the demonstrations involve a lot of glazing. That being said, the book actually includes a mini-demonstration by another artist with a different approach. All in all a great book for the intermediate painter who wants to learn more about depicting the human form.

This book doesn't quite live up to other "Atelier" books by Watson-Guitt. It presents a rather timid approach to portraiture (glaze here, scumble there...). On top of that, some of the technical information is inaccurate: "flesh ochre" is NOT a pigment (page 39) -- it is a hue; "ASTM D-4236" is NOT a "color code" (page 41) but rather the labeling standard for potential health hazards in art materials; "PR101" is the color index designation for synthetic red earth pigments, not its "chemical description"; "rosso veneto", "pozzuoli red" and "terra rosa" are NOT "core red earth pigments" (page 54) -- these are variations in hues of the same pigment class (red iron oxide pigments, either PR101 or PR102) which can vary from brand to brand!; the author also states that "a well-balanced selection of glazing pigments would include lapis lazuli" (page 40) which is such bad advice

because lapis lazuli in oil paint form is rarely available and prohibitively expensive. Of course, she fails to mention that ultramarine blue (PB29) is a synthetic and far cheaper alternative to it. Although there is a section entitled "the nature of pigments" (page 39), the author does not discuss or explain color indexes -- the standard and critical pigment information that is used by almost all artists' paint manufacturers today on their paint tube labels. The author (on page 150, etc.) misuses the term "scumble" (which is to apply a thin layer of lighter, more opaque color over a darker color) when she actually meant "glaze" (application of a thin layer of darker, more transparent paint over a lighter color)... AND THE LIST GOES ON. These technical inaccuracies aside, the step-by-step demonstrations are also such disappointing specimens. I would not recommend this book.

I received this book yesterday and love it. I think this will be one of those books which keep growing in value long after they have been sold out. This book is in the same class in regard to the traditional indirect methods of painting as Richard Schmid's *Alla Prima* in regard to direct painting. Although its focus is on portraiture the techniques and principles can be applied to figure painting and even still life. I have been studying traditional painting for two years and still find gems of advice nearly on every page. I can foresee that this book will be my companion for a long time. The book is richly illustrated but the quality of illustrations is not consistent. Most of the other artists' paintings are images of reasonable quality. Author's paintings, though, look a bit drab. I suspect not because she can't paint but because the photographer stuffed it up. This becomes evident if you look at images depicting tools, blobs of paint etc. They look equally drab. The biggest disappointment is the quality of images representing swatches for colour mixing exercises. The author seeks to demonstrate subtle nuances in tone and temperature. However the quality of images basically ruins her effort as it serves as a poor illustration for her recipes. The darks, in particular, nearly all look the same. I am sure the author did not mean it that way. Five star for the author, one for the photographer of her artwork.

As an intermediate portrait painter, I really enjoyed this book and found many of the exercises with toned grounds particularly useful. The one area I found frustrating was the colour exercises since many of the suggested paints use names that are not in common use but are used more by individual manufacturers such as Rosso Veneto, Barok Red, Terra Rosa and Puzzuoli Red (from a volcano in Italy?) These paint colours can vary widely from manufacturer to manufacturer and since no brand names are specified, it makes it difficult to replicate her exercises. Flesh Ochre, for example, which is a mixed colour, is made of different pigments in

Sennelier(PR43,PY43,PR102)and Old Holland(PY42,PR188,PR102). I finally resorted to doing some of the exercises using the paints on hand (mostly Gamblin,Daniel Smith,and Holbein) and using these charts as a reference. This is a book that will continue to be a valuable reference and I recommend it highly.

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