



Frank Serrano is featured in the April Issue 2005

## Frank Serrano Oil Painting Demonstration



One of my favorite painting destinations is the eastern Sierra Nevada Mountains, which I first saw when I went on a fishing trip with my dad more than 20 years ago. Since then, I have been on many painting trips into these mountains, and I always manage to find a new landscape to paint.

Every fall, I teach a workshop in the Sierras. This past year, I was able to stay a few extra days to do a little more painting and to gather photo references for painting in the stu-

dio. The painting demonstration is a study created from my references. Later, it will be used with other field sketches from the same area to make a larger studio painting. Of course, I enjoy painting outdoors much more than painting in the studio, so if I paint a larger painting, it has to be a piece that knocks my socks off.

I love to capture on canvas the mood that exists at a particular moment in time. This particular scene of Carson Pass from Highway 395 really caught my attention, and I knew I had to paint it.



### Step 1:

I begin my study with a simple outline drawing, using a small flat brush and thinned oil paint. My composition is usually worked out at this stage, and it can be easily adjusted before any paint is applied merely by wiping the drawing with a paper towel and thinner. I don't spend more than a couple minutes on drawing, keeping all detail to a minimum.



### Step 2:

"Massing in" the major shapes is next. Shapes are important, but the correct colors and values that make them up are essential, especially when there are so many layers of atmosphere. When mixing my colors, I work quickly but accurately, putting down the paint with bold strokes, using a large No. 6 flat. Using the largest brush possible forces me to keep things simple.



### Step 3:

Once my entire canvas is covered with paint, I can make color and value changes more successfully by comparing adjacent colors. This is an exciting stage in the painting for me. If all is going as planned, I will begin to see the light I'm trying to create.



### Step 4:

Highlights are painted next to show the existence of the late-afternoon sun. These are carefully applied, using a delicate hand and a thicker application of paint. This makes a nice textural contrast to the existing shapes and colors, which I have painted fairly thin. It is a good idea to paint all dark, shadow areas thin so, when the time comes to put on the lighter highlights, the colors won't blend together and get muddy.



### Step 5:

To make this painting work in perspective and to create the illusion of depth, I need to correct any problem edges and shapes. I will often use a palette knife or even my finger to get the result I want.



### Step 6:

Finally, I add small details to the grass and juniper trees, and intensify the foreground colors. I use a limited palette of colors, so keeping my painting looking fresh and harmonious is not a problem.

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