



Gil Dellinger is featured in the October Issue 2004

Gil Dellinger Oil Painting Demonstration



I paint a variety subjects en plein air. I work at the coast, in the farmlands, from grand landscapes and in cities. I also travel to Europe and France to find my subjects. The unifying element that permeates all my work is the expression of intense sunlight. For me, it is a metaphor for the gift of life and sustenance.

The subject for this demonstration happens to be an old orchard across the road from our farmland home in the central valley of California. I paint this subject a lot, because it has a number of views that allow for intriguing designs; and in the

late afternoon, the raking light strikes the tree trunks and makes them glow.

For venturing out, I carry my paper and pastels in my Sauter box (photo, previous page). The lid opens to become the drawing board. Behind the drawing board is a space for paper and finished paintings. All this fits conveniently on a camera tripod, like a pochade box for oil paints. My box has a shoulder strap, and my backpack contains two sets of hard pastels and the tripod.



Step 1:

For this picture, I have chosen a piece of charcoal LeCarte paper. It is their darkest color – close to black. I selected this paper because the time of day (late afternoon) allows for good contrast. To begin, I make a very light line drawing to block in masses with hard pastels used on their side. I start with the sky, because every value must relate to the tone and color of the sky. It's important to be accurate; the rest of the picture depends on it.



Step 2:

After blocking in the major masses, I begin to work with the color of the light. In the background, I continue to use hard pastels on their side to block in some of the color I see “under” the light on the trees. The mood is created by a unification of afternoon light, which is suffused, with an undertone of red-orange. Incidentally, orange makes the light in green trees come alive.



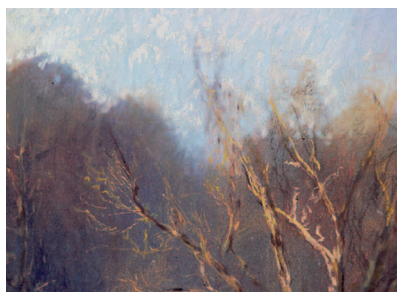
Step 3:

Here I really begin to organize my forms into masses that interplay, so the design works as a whole. I re-establish the light more completely and begin to detail the trees. You can see that I consider the mood of this piece so important that it begins to emerge from the paper, rather than being superimposed on it. Notice that I have made a mark in the lower right hand corner, indicating where a tree will be placed to balance my design.



Step 4:

I begin to detail my central focus and play it off against the tree in the lower right in the shadow. I will often put a shadow in the foreground to make the viewer want to travel deeper into the picture toward the light.



Step 5:

This gives you a sense of how I detail a tree. As I establish greater precision in the picture, I create the branches by taking a hard pastel between my thumb and forefinger and twisting it so it does not make a straight-line branch but rather a branch with knobs and twists. I am also very conscious of the light and shadow on the tree itself. Halfway through the picture until the end, I work from the background out, so each layer of space fits in front of the one before.



Step 6:

This detail is a close look at the picture as it nears completion. Atmosphere is adjusted by slightly gray-ing-out the background trees; the masses of big trees behind have minimal detail. They have been built by masses of colors laid one on another with hard pastel but never touching them to blend. I let each color tone the one placed over it. Hard pastels are more transparent, so they tend to let earlier layers bleed through. I increase detail and intensity as I come forward, so space is consistent.

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