



Jean Legassick is featured in the December Issue 2004

Jean Legassick Oil Painting Demonstration

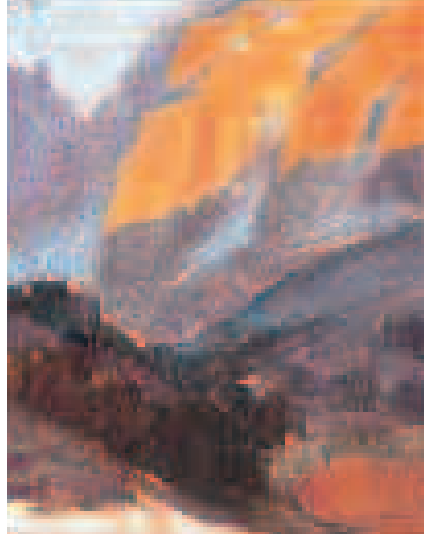
Evening Light On the Crag was painted on one of my annual mule pack trips into the Sierra. This late-light “alpenglow” lasts only briefly. Because of the swiftly changing light, I could not have done this painting if I had tried to paint it when I first saw it. Instead, I made a quick pencil sketch of the light and shadow patterns, and made a note to

myself to return at the same place about an hour earlier the next day. I could set up my equipment and block in my drawing and the simple value areas in anticipation of the great light show about to happen. When the light and color were right, I was ready to paint.



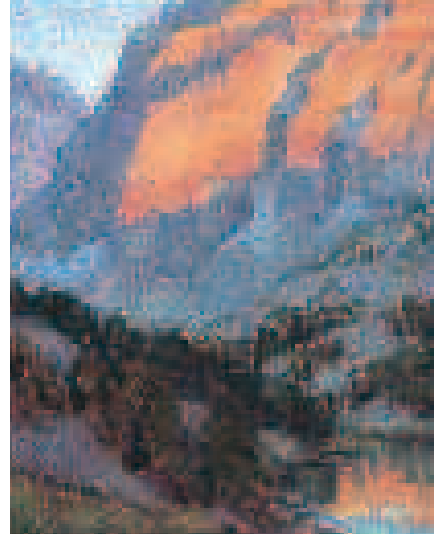
Step 1: Drawing

I start my painting by using a viewfinder to establish my composition. Taking only a minute or two, I then quickly draw the scene on my canvas with a small brush, using an earth color, such as burnt sienna, with a lot of thinner. My drawing not only serves as a guide, but it also helps me see whether the compositional lines are creating an exciting dynamic.



Step 2: Values

Using thin paint and a large brush (#10 or 12), and by merging close values, I block in very loosely the three or four main value areas of my painting. This locks in the light and shadow patterns for me that will change, sometimes dramatically by the time I get to the finish of the painting. I only approximate the average color at this stage, as I will be modifying it as I get further along in the painting. However, the right value is VERY important.



Step 3: Color

Keeping established values intact, I look for subtle changes of warm and cool color within those areas. Still using a large brush, I mix big batches of the average color – the “mother color” – then add colors to warm or cool it as needed. I’m using much thicker paint at this stage. To make any corrections, I use my palette knife to scrape off areas so they can be repainted cleanly. At this time, I also establish my lightest light and darkest dark.



Throughout the entire painting, I step back from my easel often and squint, looking back and forth between my painting and the scene, to make sure my shapes, colors and values are right. To help me see colors correctly, I make a little peephole with my fingers. Holding my hand out at arm’s length, I peer through this hole and isolate a color as though it is a little paint spot. I also often use a little mirror to check my painting in reverse. Doing this makes obvious mistakes jump out by seeing them with a fresh perspective.

Step 4: Finish

As I continue to fine-tune the painting, I find that I see subtleties of color I hadn’t noticed. Also, even though the light has changed by now, I don’t try to “chase” it; I try to remain true to my original pattern of dark and light. Using a smaller brush now, I carve around the thick paint to make more sensitive shapes. As a final part of this stage, I add the finishing little touches, such as the slender trunks on the pines.

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