

“Steps in Successful Acrylic Painting”

Annie O’Brien Gonzales

Planning

- choose subject matter—still life setup, Painting Notes, photos?
- pick a format—horizontal, vertical, square
- select surface—board, canvas panel, canvas
- choose size of surface
- decide on color scheme—monochromatic, analogous, or complementary
then make a color palette swatch

Set up

- Find a spot to paint—a flat table or easel with space on your dominant side to place materials.
- Lay out materials— surface, paper palette sheet or parchment paper, water, brushes, paper towels or rags, paints, painting medium

7 Step Acrylic Painting Process

1. Underpaint surface—Eliminate white surface with thin **transparent** loosely painted color thinned with water.
2. Map—Create a map of your painting design using underpainting color or soft pastel. Do not stress-this is not a drawing—just 5 or 6 shapes on the surface to “locate” the image. This is the only step where you can mix acrylic paint with water to thin it. **DO NOT DRAW DETAIL!**
3. Block in large shapes with darkest versions of colors loosely with thin paint to fill in major shapes. Block in all areas with thin layer of color mixed with fluid medium.
4. This is where it gets interesting! Mix value and color variations & layer onto shapes paying attention to dark/light, warm/cool relationships of adjoining shapes.
5. Stand back, evaluate painting—especially values. Take a photo with your phone and shift to black & white then check to see there is value contrast between large shapes. REMEMBER—color gets the credit but value does the work!
6. Take a break, step back and study your painting. Make any corrections in values, shapes, or colors. If something stops your eye you may need to make adjustments.
7. Now you can add detail (the jewelry!)—just enough detail or pattern to add to the drama not take away from it.

Critique your work & move on!

- Set painting aside, go away, have lunch, take a walk, sleep on it. Give it some time and come back to it before you make major changes.
- Fix any obvious distractions—does something catch your eye that shouldn't?
- Critique painting objectively referring to Elements & Principles of Art—make notes (in your Painting Notes?) of what to do on the next one (*you will get better at this the more you practice!*)
- Set this painting aside and do another! *Remember it is a far better learning experience to do **lots** of paintings, learn from each one and then do another painting, rather than to fuss over one painting for days, weeks or months!*

ACRYLIC PAINTING WORDS TO PAINT BY

*think **process** not product*

paint dark to light

paint thin to thick

paint big shapes to detail

make everything different—shapes, spaces, values

fix the one thing bothering you the most first

For more painting lessons:

“Bold Expressive Painting: Mixed Media Techniques”, 2016 & “The Joy of Acrylic Painting”, 2017-North Light Books

www.boldexpressivepaintingworkshops.com

www.letspaintflowers.com

www.annieobriengonzales.com