



artist daily  
*presents*

# CREATING A POWERFUL STILL LIFE PAINTING:

25

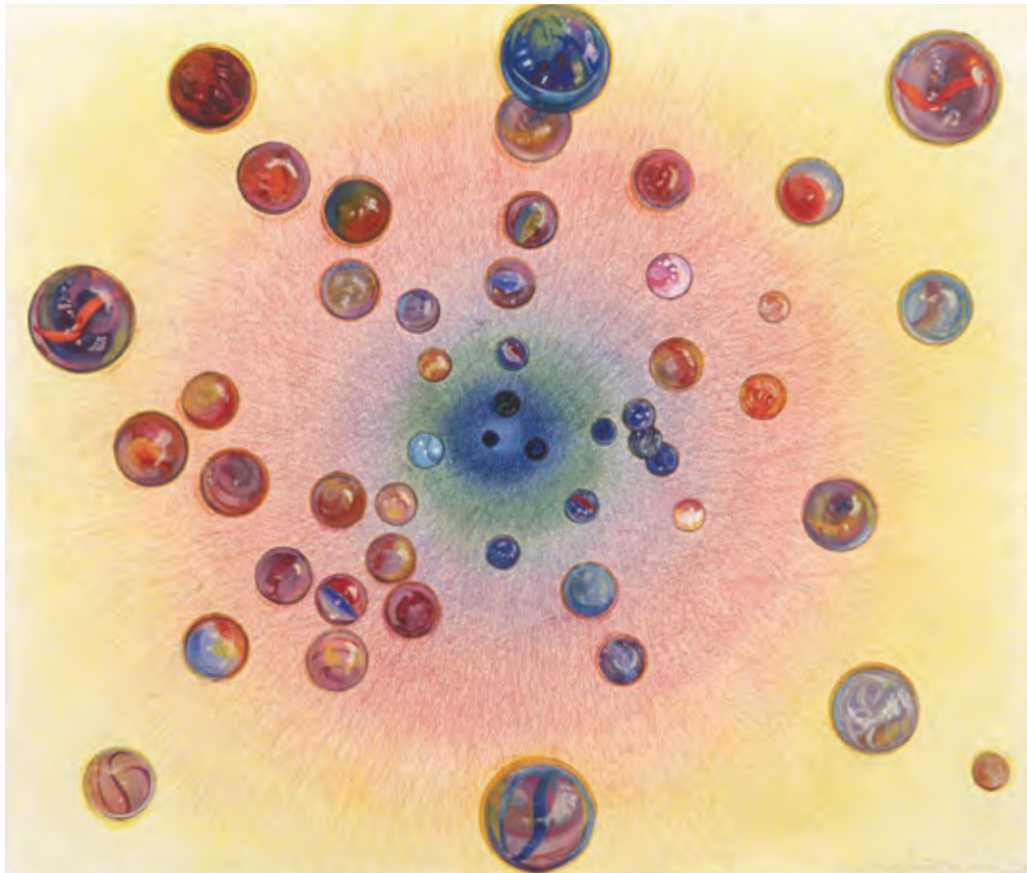
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Tips to Enhance  
Your Still Life Art

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# Convincing Objects in Imaginary Spaces

by Lynne Moss Perricelli



Into the Light:  
Yellow  
2004, colored pencil  
and collage, 19 x 22.  
Collection the artist.

New York artist Lisa Dinhofer is one of the lucky ones. Despite the cultural mandates to grow up and abandon the joys of childhood, she has never lost her sense of play. In many ways, in fact, Dinhofer makes her work her play by creating drawings and paintings that entice the viewer into a magical space where the objects are real but the space clearly is not.

"I want to create a new world in my work," she says. "One that the viewer wants to be a part of." **One way she accomplishes this is by using objects with universal appeal, such as her ubiquitous marbles.** "Everyone has a story about marbles," she explains. "They represent a first collection, a first experience with group play, and with games and even gambling." Other toys that fascinate her include dolls, clowns, and model trains. "We are socialized

through toys," Dinhofer says. "Through creative play we mimic adult life, and toys stay with us forever."

Besides their symbolic function, these objects make ideal subjects for art. The marbles, for example, "are like abstract paintings," the artist explains. "I can play with space and color but still remain grounded in the object." Furthermore, the dolls and clowns suggest the paradox of seemingly innocent toys that look sinister out of context. Dinhofer's disembodied



Entering the Web

2004, graphite, 22 x 30. All artwork this article courtesy Denise Bibro Fine Art, New York, New York, unless otherwise indicated.

Two Marbles

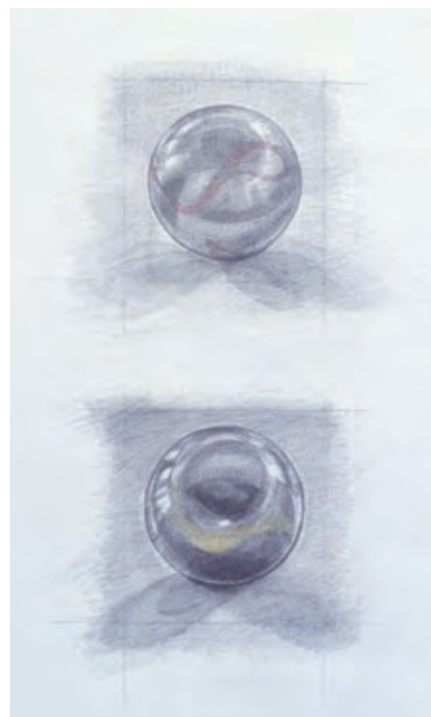
2003, graphite, 15 x 11.

stands the role of drawings as an essential part of the creative process. **She draws daily, believing the practice keeps her skills sharp and provides the opportunity to explore new ideas.** “In drawings I get to play, to experiment,” she explains. “Many of the drawings may never become paintings, but I draw because I love it. If the paintings are novels, the drawings are essays, poems—sometimes they’re just thoughts.” **Indeed, she never starts a painting without first making drawings.** Some of her ideas for paintings have come from small, cursory sketches, while others originated from one interesting idea in a detailed, complex drawing. When she comes to a difficult passage in a painting, she often makes a drawing to work out a

dolls’ heads and isolated clown faces are unsettling images—playful, even lovely objects that have an edge. “I like for the viewers to see beyond what they might expect,” the artist says.

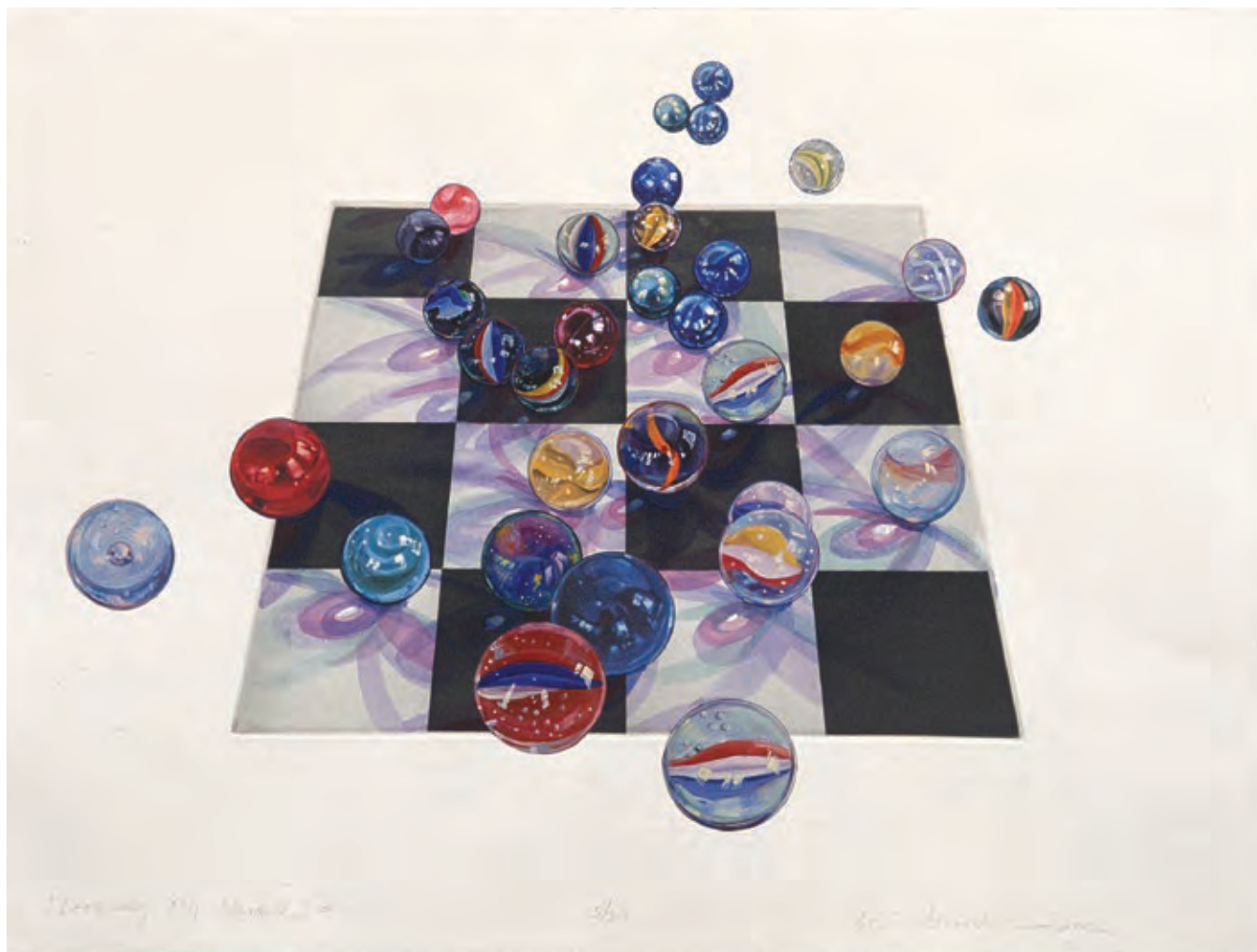
**Dinhofer’s primary concern is to create an illusion, and she makes a clear distinction between this pursuit and that of being a realist.** “It’s part of an evolution I went through,” she says. “I’m interested in spatial relationships. I want to create an image that is believable but fantastic. The viewer can accept the premise, but the objects could not be photographed in the way they appear in the drawing or painting.”

With a body of work that includes—besides works on paper in a variety of media—paintings, prints, and even a glass-tile mosaic commissioned by New York City’s Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), Dinhofer under-



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*“We are socialized through toys. Through creative play we mimic adult life, and toys stay with us forever.”*

resolution. Her series of cherries, pears, and insects served as life studies for later paintings. “I’ve made entire paintings of subjects that may die, working from life and studies,” she adds.

The artist maintains several custom-made sketchbooks of Fabriano paper in various weights and colors. Some she uses for figure-drawing sessions, a practice she thinks of as a warm-up, likening it to a pianist doing scales. “I have to feel confident in drawing the figure because I teach the figure,” she says, “but I also believe that if I can draw the figure well, I can draw anything.” Other sketchbooks—with mostly white and off-white Somerset paper—are for the other subjects she fancies at a given moment, including birds, flowers, insects, mice, and skulls. The paper’s substantial weight allows her to work on both sides and in both wet and

Losing My  
Marbles No. 1  
2002, mixed media,  
15 x 20.

dry media, primarily graphite, colored pencil, and watercolor. Drawing five or six hours a day, Dinhofer typically works on one or two drawings in one of the sketchbooks, while on other days she concentrates on a more developed drawing that may take several weeks to complete.

Some of Dinhofer’s drawings feature a shallow picture plane and a lone object, with no horizon line, while others are decidedly more complex, with multiple objects and a sense of deep space. Because the artist always works from life, for these more complicated pieces **she constructs an elaborate still-life setup consisting of a couple of tiers made of Plexiglas, which allows her to**



**ABOVE**  
Strawberries  
2000, graphite, 18 x 13.

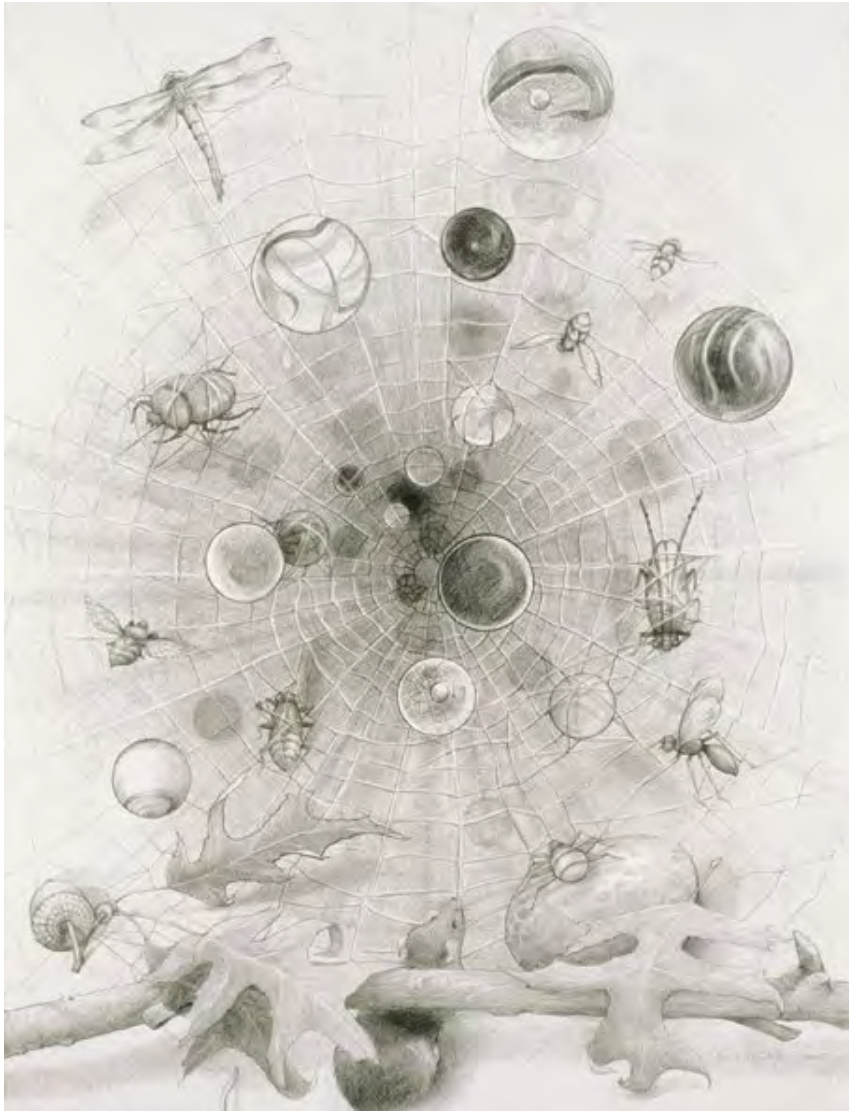
**ABOVE LEFT**  
Three Heads  
1997, graphite, 10 x 17.  
Collection the artist.

**LEFT**  
Two examples from  
Dinhofer's drawing books.

view each level at the same time. For *Entering the Web*, for instance, she laid a watercolor painting of a sunburst on a tabletop, then placed four small Plexiglas blocks and a piece of thin Plexiglas on top, onto which she put a cobweb drawn on acetate, several marbles, a skull, and a few dried insects. On top of that plane she placed another set of four small Plexiglas blocks and a sheet of Plexiglas, onto which she arranged more marbles and insects. The arrangement yielded three distinct planes that she could fuse into a two-dimensional image. As Dinhofer puts it, “The objects observed through the Plexiglas have weight but seem suspended in space. Therefore I can draw the reflected light and shadows as if my subjects were flying in one instance and grounded in another.”

Dinhofer’s interest in creating an illusion and conveying a sense of play culminated in *Losing My Marbles*, a project commissioned by the MTA Arts for Transit program. Consisting of five walls, the mural was installed at the Times Square subway station in 2003 and measures approximately 9’ x 90’. “I had been making chine collé prints, with a shadow that stretched across the bevel from the plate onto the paper,” she describes. “I liked the idea of the subject

leaving the borders of the print, and I thought that with a wall as the surface, I could break out of the rectangle. I had been working with marbles since 1985, and they are part of my signature, so I thought this was a chance to let the marbles escape.” Using a ballpoint pen or graphite pencil, the artist made a series of thumbnail drawings that explored different approaches to this concept, with the marbles coming off the wall, the floor tilting. “I wanted to create a piece that was site-specific,” she says, “and I wanted to open up the area, make it joyous.” As always for Dinhofer, drawings were central to refining the



The Precipice  
2004, graphite, 25 x 15.

*“In drawings I get to play, to experiment. Many of the drawings may never become paintings, but I draw because I love it. If the paintings are novels, the drawings are essays, poems. Sometimes they’re just thoughts.”*

concept. “There’s never a big bang. It’s always the sixth, seventh, or eighth idea that starts to gel,” she adds.

Dinhofer was chosen as a finalist for the subway commission based on slides she sent the MTA. Then, working with an 11”-x-17” architectural rendering, the artist made about four drawings—in graphite and colored pencil—on top of the rendering, using color copies of the marbles from her paintings so that she could more easily play with their scale and positioning. After she had finalized the imagery, she made two scale drawings, one that was ½” per square foot, which the mosaic fabricator used to bid on the project, and another that was 1” per square foot, which served as the final maquette. She used graphite, gouache, watercolor, and collage to make the scale drawings. In addition, to show the MTA committee a representative marble, she made a 12” square marble in oil-on-paper. Dinhofer won the commission based on the maquette.

In terms of subject matter, *Losing My Marbles* exemplifies Dinhofer’s sense of play—her pleasure in expertly rendering shiny, colorful things in a skewed space. The marbles seem to come at the viewer, to float, and all in a lively and engaging presentation of

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**LISA DINHOFER** earned her B.A. from Brandeis University, in Waltham, Massachusetts, and her M.F.A. from the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia. She has had many solo exhibitions, most recently in November 2005 at Denise Bibro Fine Art, in New York City. Her glass-tile mosaic mural, *Losing My Marbles*, a project commissioned by the New York City Metropolitan Transportation Authority for its Arts for Transit program, is installed at the Times Square

subway station at Eighth Avenue. Her paintings and drawings have appeared in many group shows, and the artist is a recipient of such awards as the Gladys Emerson Cook Prize, from the National Academy of Design, in New York City, and artist’s fellowships from The MacDowell Colony and Yaddo. She teaches figure drawing at the National Academy School of Fine Arts, in New York City, and is represented by Denise Bibro Fine Art, also in New York City.





color and light, which greatly improves the antiseptic environment of the subway station. Travelers, who become inadvertent viewers, seem to love the piece. “Kids especially love the marbles,” the artist says. “People tell me they see tourists taking pictures of their kids in front of the mural.”

Like Dinhofer’s other marble pieces, *Losing My Marbles* does not suggest a narrative per se, although some of her other works could be described as such. **The artist explains that for her drawings with multiple objects she simply puts the items together and adjusts them to see if a story emerges, even if she’s not sure what the story is.** *31 Marbles and a Mouse*, for instance, combines inanimate and animate objects on the same scale. “The mouse is looking at the toy hopper filled with marbles,” the artist explains, “and maybe the mouse represents the viewer. It’s hard to tell what’s going on.” More recently, *The Precipice* combines the mouse with a web, marbles, and insects. The branch and leaves in the foreground stabilize the pictorial space while the web, drawn in one-point perspective, moves the viewer uneasily into the unknown. These pieces point to Dinhofer’s willingness to take

*31 Marbles  
and a Mouse*  
1997, oil on  
panel, 18 x 22.

risks and to play with her subjects, and to her openness to whatever story might emerge.

“I’ve always loved beautiful things,” Dinhofer says, “but **you have to be careful about making just pretty pictures. There has to be something more.**” Fortunately for Dinhofer, she has been able to find the content she wants in the objects she loves. By moving real objects into imaginary realms, she can not only thrill viewers with her consummate drawing skills but leave them guessing. Her work silences, for a moment, that mandate to grow up. It seems to say, “For now, just imagine.” ■

# Painting Techniques in Still Life Oil Painting

by Bob Bahr



**J**oe Gyurcsak, a veteran painter and art teacher, recently gave a demonstration at a regional arts guild in which he showed how **using a limited palette can help unify the look of a still life painting.** Gyurcsak, the resident artist at Utrecht Art Supplies, took an event at the Burlington County Art Guild, in Moorestown, New Jersey, as an opportunity to explore ideas behind a piece he admired—N.C. Wyeth’s *The Dusty Bottle*, a 1924 oil painting that’s in the collec-

tion of the Brandywine River Museum, in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. Wyeth’s somewhat mysterious piece lets a huge green glass bottle largely disappear into the darkness of the background. Gyurcsak sought to recreate the low values of Wyeth’s painting—and also Wyeth’s masterful way of wringing the most out of a simple composition. “**Any old object can be interesting depending on how it is lit,**” Gyurcsak says. “Wyeth really shows how few objects you need to make a painting interesting. He didn’t do too many still lifes, but the ones he did were gems. I’ve wanted to do a painting similar to Wyeth’s for a long time, and after 10 years of looking, I finally found a bottle like the one he painted—in an old antique shop in Easton, Maryland.”

Gyurcsak decided to set up the still life arrangement on the floor about eight feet from his easel and to shine a warm light on the objects—the afore-

mentioned glass bottle, a brownware jug, and a white plate with an orange on it—on the left side at floor level. The objects sat on a piece of black velvet that

continued up behind them, creating a background that effectively absorbed almost all light. A second lamp, a balanced light fitted with a warm bulb and a cool bulb, shone on the artist’s easel and trickled a weak secondary light on the objects’ right side. Gyurcsak had previously tested many options to

The  
Remains  
2007, oil,  
24 x 24.





**LEFT**

Tea Kettle

2007, oil on linen, 20 x 22. All artwork this article collection the artist unless otherwise indicated.

**BELOW**

Fruits of Life

2005, oil on linen, 14 x 19. Private collection.

**the middle of the value range.** At the start of the demonstration, Gyurcsak sketched the outlines of the objects with burnt sienna mixed with alkyd glazing medium and a little turpentine using a size 8 filbert bristle brush. “Delicate sketching was not needed because the scene has a dark background—the drawing could be cruder,” Gyurcsak comments. “This step is all about determining how the subject is going to fill up or be contained on the canvas. **You have to look at the composition carefully and see how the shapes will fill the space first.**”

He then turned his attention to his palette. Gyurcsak made a point of explaining the advantages of using a limited palette similar to the one suggested by many of Anders Zorn’s paintings, including yellow ochre, cadmium red light or vermillion, cobalt blue, ivory black, and white. This color selection is sometimes slightly broadened on Gyurcsak’s palette by the inclusion

determine the placement that most effectively showed off the objects and the light effects. (The rest of the lights in the room were turned out.) He affixed a homemade cropping tool—a viewfinder—to the articulated arm of a modified lamp so that the artist’s view of the still life setup would remain consistent from his place at the easel. **“I find that fixing the viewfinder to a stationary object is very valuable,”** explains Gyurcsak. “It keeps you from changing the cropping distance. Students sometimes don’t realize that they are holding the viewfinder at a slightly different distance each time they hold it with their hands, and reducing the visual area of the composition can give you a simplified look, which is especially important when painting a quick two-hour demo such as this one,” he pointed out.

The artist had previously toned a 30”-x-30” Utrecht cotton duck canvas by rubbing burnt sienna oil paint and alkyd medium on the surface with a

rag and letting it dry thoroughly over a few weeks. As other artists have also pointed out, **a tone on the canvas eliminates the bright light value of a gessoed surface (which “closes” the pupil of eye), lessens the absorbency of the surface and allows smoother paint application, and enables an artist to work from**



of cadmium yellow medium, burnt sienna, and ultramarine blue (replacing cobalt blue). **The objective is to reduce color options and create color mixtures within those options that automatically create a harmonious light in which to envelope the still life.** Alkyd glazing medium mixed with the paints allowed Gyurcsak to work a little more quickly, as it partially set up almost immediately. The teacher always pays careful attention to the organization of his mixing palette and strongly advises students to do likewise, citing past masters who avowed that the appearance

Bottles  
2008, oil on  
panel,  
24 x 24.

of an artist's palette speaks eloquently of the person's process. **"An out-of-control palette equals an out-of-**

**control painting,"** Gyurcsak asserts. **"Pay attention to how you manage your palette."** Another key point he made was the importance of holding a color mixture on the palette knife up to the area of the subject one wishes to paint, in the same light conditions as the subject. **"Keep your easel close to your subject so you can compare them,"** he says. **"Don't worry so much about making the perfect brushstroke. If the value, intensity, and temperature of the mixture are right, then it will work. Put it down fluidly, and don't worry about the accuracy of the stroke. And don't pet the paint on the canvas. Load the brush, lay it down, and don't go over it too many times."**

Gyurcsak blocked in the big shapes



## GYURCSAK'S MATERIALS

### Palette

- cadmium yellow medium
- cadmium red light
- yellow ochre
- burnt sienna
- ultramarine blue
- ivory black
- titanium white

### Surface

- 30"-x-30" Utrecht cotton duck canvas

### Brushes

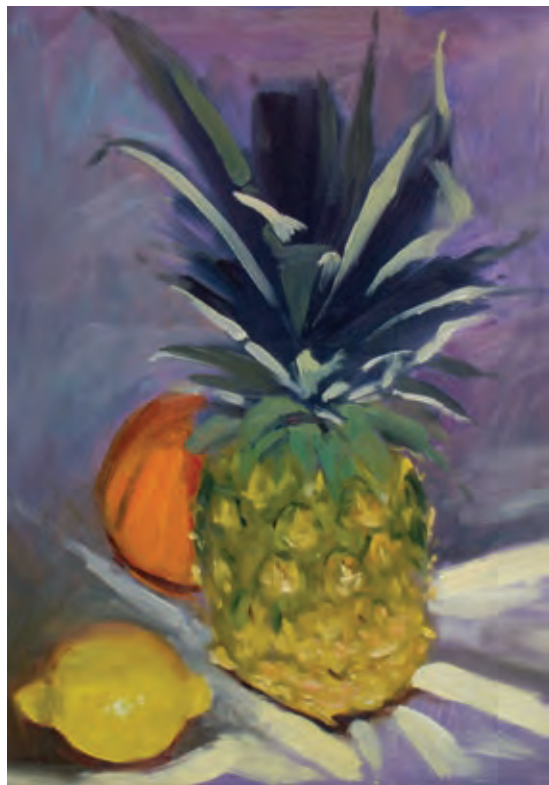
- Utrecht Series 219 filbert soft bristle brushes in sizes 4 through 12
- Utrecht Series 219 flat soft bristle brushes in sizes 8 through 12
- fan brush

### Mediums

- turpentine
- Utrecht alkyd glazing medium



with local color using size 8, 10, and 12 flat brushes, placing the strokes down as if building a mosaic, leaving some canvas showing. He concentrated on value, but nevertheless pointed out that the dark of the background was cool (made with ivory black and ultramarine blue), whereas the dark of the glass bottle was a dark green. The dark background was added next, roughly defining the shapes of the objects. (Later in the process, he would blend the edges of these areas with a fan brush so the edges were lost and the bottle appeared to fade into the darkness.) Gyurcsak then moved on to the other objects in the still life, blocking them in with middle-range local color. “I’m doing this so I can still go up and down in value range later on these objects,” he explains. The artist was careful to not



**ABOVE**  
Pineapple Still Life  
2004, oil on panel, 18 x 12.  
Private collection.



**ABOVE**  
Pears  
2006, oil on  
linen, 26 x 26.

**TOP**  
On the Edge  
2009, oil on linen,  
24 x 24.





**LEFT**  
Still Life Demonstration  
2008, oil, 24 x 24.

**BELOW LEFT**  
Orchard  
2008, oil on panel, 12 x 16. Private collection.

**BELOW RIGHT**  
Three Peaches  
2008, oil on panel, 8 x 16. Private collection.

artist's toolbox to break the big shapes into smaller pieces, including details, various values, diverse brushstrokes, and contrasting color temperatures. The subject of his palette came up again. "Ask yourself questions about each color you mix," he says. "Is the area light or dark, rich or dull, warm or cool?" The atmosphere suggested by the still life scene played a large role in its appearance, and Gyurcsak pointed out that capturing this ambience would be easier due to his limited palette. The white plate, which was more dimly lit and thus much darker than the reference photo indicates, was reflecting many of the colors of its surrounding objects. The artist used the rather neutral green-grays that were naturally produced on his palette to paint the local color of the plate. "Don't be literal when you paint white objects," Gyurcsak says. "Use some of the nice grays that show up on your mixing palette. It helps create

paint over the toned canvas in the areas where highlights occur on the jug, orange, and plate, pointing out that the color of the toned canvas was brighter than the adjacent areas but not as light as the lightest lights he would later add.

Switching to smaller brushes, Gyurcsak began to break down the bigger shapes into littler ones, and he

quickly progressed to putting down a couple of highlights to serve as landmarks. "These few highlights help get the value range established," he says. "It will also help establish the form, turn the form. And it will do this quickly, which is important in a fast painting such as this alla prima demonstration." Gyurcsak utilized several tools in the



a unified atmosphere.” He also had some advice on painting glass—often an intimidating subject for beginners. “Just find the light source, then determine the temperature and shape of the highlight,” says the artist. “Don’t get caught up in tight descriptions of objects—paint the highlight, and let the abstract nature of glass and reflective objects do the rest. I always remember what Giorgio Morandi said, that there is nothing more abstract than realism. That is so true. Pay attention to how one shape is interacting with other shapes. How do they fit together? Remove yourself from the everyday observation of things.”

**TOP RIGHT**  
Vegetable  
Still Life  
2006, oil, 16 x 24.  
Private collection.



**BOTTOM RIGHT**  
Dynasty  
2008, oil on linen,  
18 x 24.



Finally, Gyurcsak added the last highlights and blended the edges of the dark sides of objects with a fan brush, merging the color of the background with the colors of the objects in some places—even overlapping them at times. “The eye wants to fill in what is not there,” he explains. The artist discussed edges, advising students to be spare in using hard ones, utilizing soft edges much more often. “Hard edges attract your eye, so be careful where you place them.” Wyeth had scratched “three hrs” into the corner of the canvas of *The Dusty Bottle*. Gyurcsak did nothing similar, although he executed his still life in two. “Just trying to pull off something that looks like something,” he modestly said. His students seemed to think the artist had accomplished much more than merely “something.” ■

*Bob Bahr is a freelance editor and writer based in New York City.*

➤ **GO TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR A DEMONSTRATION**

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

**JOE GYURCSAK** is a painter and teacher based in Mercerville, New Jersey. He is the resident artist for Utrecht Art Supplies, providing the art-materials company with technical information from the vantage point of a working artist and conducting lectures and painting workshops throughout the United States on the company's behalf. Gyurcsak's art has been juried into numerous exhibitions, and his work has been featured in group and solo shows in dozens of galleries and

museums. The artist earned a B.F.A. from the School of Visual Arts, in New York City, and attended Parsons the New School for Design, also in New York City, and the Johnson Atelier and Technical Institute of Sculpture, in Mercerville. He is represented by Frederick Galleries, in Spring Lake, New Jersey; Bucks Gallery of Fine Art, in Newtown, Pennsylvania; and Radclyffe Gallery, in New Hope, Pennsylvania. For more information, visit [www.josephgyurcsak.com](http://www.josephgyurcsak.com).



# DEMONSTRATION: STILL LIFE DEMO



## Reference

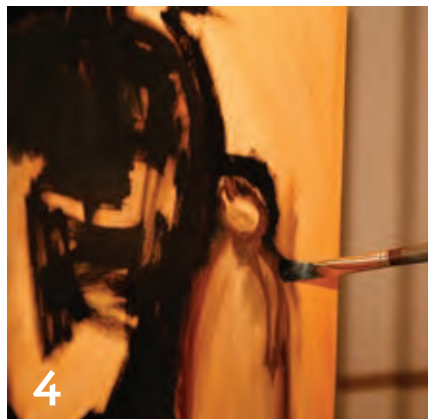
The still life setup Gyurcsak arranged is an approximation of N.C. Wyeth's composition for the painting *The Dusty Bottle*. The actual scene Gyurcsak painted from was much darker than this photo; he further manipulated the lighting so that a faint light at ground level hit the objects from the left, and a bit of the light from the artist's easel lamp spilled onto the objects from the right.

## Step 1

Gyurcsak studied the scene through a homemade viewfinder that he attached to an articulated arm and alligator clip he fashioned from a lamp. By making the viewfinder stationary, the artist could ensure that his view of the composition would remain constant throughout the painting session.

## Step 2

The painter had previously toned his canvas by applying burnt sienna oil paint and alkyd glazing medium to the canvas with a rag and allowing it to dry over a few weeks. Now he could sketch the outlines of the composition with a mixture of burnt sienna, alkyd glazing medium, and turpentine. "This is just to see how the shapes will fit into the space," says Gyurcsak.



## Step 3

Gyurcsak next began blocking in the big shapes with an eye toward value.

## Step 4

The background, which the artist constructed by placing the still life setup on black velvet that continued up behind the arrangement, was darker and cooler than the very dark green of the large glass bottle. Gyurcsak mixed this color with ivory black and ultramarine blue and scrubbed in the background around the objects.

## Step 5

Next, he added the local color of the objects, taking care to preserve the areas of the canvas where he wanted highlights to show. "Don't feel the need to close every brushstroke and cover every inch of the canvas," says Gyurcsak. "Leave some of the tone of the canvas."

➤ **CONTINUED**



## DEMONSTRATION: STILL LIFE DEMO CONTINUED



### Step 6

The objects were just roughly blocked in, but Gyurcsak was already addressing highlights. “It helps to get the full value range established to avoid getting stuck in middle range,” he asserts. “Put a highlight down early on—it will also help establish the form, turn the form. And it will do this quickly, which is important in a fast painting such as this alla prima demonstration.” Gyurcsak added that he doesn’t use up all his lightest lights so he can adjust the value range at the end of the painting process.

### Step 7

The next step was to break the big shapes down into smaller ones, adding just enough detail to make the scene convincing. “When you get to the smaller areas, load the brush with paint,” advises Gyurcsak. “Lay it down, and don’t go over it too many times. The value, intensity, and color temperature need to be right, but don’t worry too much about the accuracy of the stroke.”

### Step 8

Finally, the artist adjusted the colors in the white plate. “If you work from a limited palette, the nice grays that will naturally show up on your palette will work well for white objects that are picking up the colors in the scene,” Gyurcsak says. “And reflections in the white will have values much darker than the local color of the objects. For example, the reflection of the orange in the plate is much darker.”



#### THE COMPLETED DEMONSTRATION:

Still Life Demo  
2009, oil, 30 x 30.  
Collection the artist.

# Backlit Flowers

ATTENDING TO THE DIRECTION OF THE LIGHT IS A CRITICAL STEP IN CREATING A DYNAMIC STILL LIFE. HERE'S HOW TO PAINT A BACKLIT FLORAL SETUP.

by Janet Walsh

Capturing sunlight has always both intrigued and challenged artists. Considering how the colors in light and shadow change from morning until evening, it's wise to take a lot of photographs for reference later. In fact, take more than you think you will need. Shoot close up, as well as from the right, left, vertically, horizontally, or even from the top looking down.

For this demonstration, I carefully considered the objects, selecting only those I thought were absolutely essential. The flowers, container, stand, and setting all contributed to the feeling of early-morning quiet that I wanted to convey. It was also important to select a window where I could achieve backlight close to the setup, as this kind of lighting gave me a strong shadow pattern around the bowl and pitcher. After a lot of deliberation, I chose an old porcelain pitcher and bowl. The simplified shapes and smooth surface helped to reflect the warm morning light. The old plant stand made of bronze and marble featured interesting details in the design around the stand that would complement both the pitcher and bowl. This also added interest to the bottom of the painting. For the bouquet, I gathered numerous values of small multicolored flowers and greens. The white and light-colored phlox around the edges of the bouquet emphasized the light around the setup.



Reference

I chose each option carefully to create a cohesive setup that would hold the viewer's interest.

➤ **GO TO THE NEXT PAGE  
FOR A DEMONSTRATION**

# DEMONSTRATION: SUNLIGHT AND SHADOWS



## WALSH'S MATERIALS

### Palette

- cadmium yellow pale
- Indian yellow
- quinacridone gold
- alizarin crimson
- quinacridone magenta
- cobalt violet
- cerulean blue
- Joe's blue
- raw sienna
- burnt sienna

### Brushes

- Isabey series 6235 Petit Gris No. 6
- Isabey series 6227Z No. 12
- Cheap Joe's No. 6 Legend kolinsky
- American Journey 3/4" flat
- Fritch No. 4 scrubber

### Surface

- Kilimanjaro 300-lb cold-pressed watercolor paper

### Other

- Incredible White Mask
- kneaded eraser

## Step 1

Although the photograph I took of the setup was in color, I printed a version of it in black and white because this format would make it easier to see the value shapes. While the light was where I wanted it, I did a contour drawing so I could remember the value pattern. When I was ready to start painting, I referred to the drawing to transfer the predominant values in the flowers, background and window, porcelain pitcher and bowl, and plant stand to the watercolor paper.





## Step 2

Before I started painting, I applied Incredible White Mask on all the white and light-color flowers, thereby making it easier for me to paint the remainder of the bouquet and to retain those light shapes. It's important to have various shapes overlapping to keep the eyes moving through the painting.

I started my painting of the bouquet with the midtones, then enriched the mid-darks to dark tones as the white and lighter shapes stayed clean.



► CONTINUED



### Step 3

Next, I focused on the pitcher and bowl. Taking a fresh look at these areas, I decided at this stage I needed to simplify the busy reflected light shapes.



### Steps 4 & 5

I mixed an ample amount of all the colors I needed in preparing to paint the pitcher and bowl. I always mix more paint than I think I will need so that I don't have to try to re-create the mixes in the middle of the painting. Starting at the top of the pitcher, I applied a violet-blue mix in an S-stroke, changing the color to a pale yellow, then going back to the original mix. Adding a light yellow color in both the bowl and the pitcher suggested a rounded shape and introduced some subtle color changes. I cleaned the brush every time I changed color. I applied several washes before I achieved the value I wanted. I repeated this process again for the bowl because it is slightly darker. For a finishing touch, I added a subtle light yellow inside the bowl.

I simplified some of the distinct shadow shapes in the bronze table. This added some needed texture to the lower section of the painting. I used warm and cool color mixes for the sections in sunlight, keeping the color soft and subtle so that those areas would blend with the rest of the painting.

► **CONTINUED**





## Step 6

Although the photograph showed a light background, I wanted to explore using different values and shades of green in the background. I copied the outline of the bouquet on tracing paper and then transferred these shapes to a sheet of watercolor paper. Next, I painted individual dark, middle, and light tones in these shapes. I cut out these pieces and laid them on the painting so I could select which value color I wanted to use. The choice ended up being my original selection of a light yellow-green because this color seemed to best portray the morning light. This technique was a helpful way to make decisions and experiment without disturbing the watercolor paper. I softened some of the edges of the white shapes with a scrubber brush.



► **CONTINUED**





## Step 7

I painted the window frame last because it was the stage set for the piece. Using a color here that was similar to the one used on the pitcher and bowl added a harmony to the painting. First I painted the frames with a light red-and-blue mix. When this was dry, I glazed over it with light greens, light yellows, and reds. One side was warm; the other was cool. I darkened the bottom to add weight as well as to enhance the feeling of light and set the stage.



## Step 8

Once I had completed the painting, I stood back and evaluated it. Then I signed it. Note: As you can see here, I always leave an area of white around my paintings. Later I will crop this with a mat. I leave the white margin because it provides an area where I can put down a dab of paint and see if it's the right color and value before adding it to the painting.

➤ **CONTINUED**



**THE COMPLETED DEMONSTRATION:**  
Sunlight and Shadows  
009, watercolor, 28 x 18. Collection the artist.



# Top Resources for Artists



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