

Brian Harrild - March 2014

Working in acrylic, Brian took us to the Scottish highlands in winter.

Starting with a grey/blue wash on the sky he explained how he began life as an artist.

“I trained as an illustrator, so I learned how to cheat, because you don’t have weeks or even days for a picture - you just have hours. That’s why I like acrylic because you can always correct - you don’t have to be one hundred per cent accurate, you just go over it again.”

He then filled in his mountain shapes, adding brown areas for the rocky outcrops, carefully going round the horses leaving them as white paper.

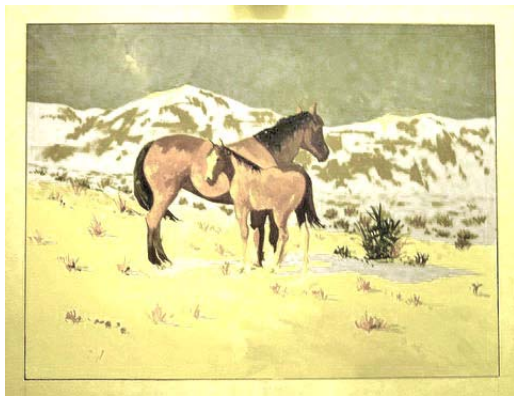


“I like working on paper because it absorbs the acrylic straight away. This is 130lb paper glued on to a piece of 2mm mdf which I get from Wessex Pictures*. That makes it nice and firm and I know it won’t buckle. Now with acrylic, you can work from dark to light or light to dark – it doesn’t matter – unlike watercolour - you can do it either way. And black has an amazing effect on colour. The contrast brings out the brightness. It’s easy to dull a bright colour but not the other way round.”

“Because acrylic dries so quickly I mix my paints beforehand – having worked out roughly what I’ll want – then I keep them in air-tight screwtop jars – some quite small like this little Tiptree jam pot - and that keeps the paint usable for ages. As for acrylic varnish, there’s no point in paying money for ‘artists acrylic varnish’ when you can get ordinary varnish - which is acrylic anyway - for much less at a DIY shop. It’s the same with Gesso for use as a primer. The point of it is to provide a matt, slightly gritty surface for the paint to adhere to - but why pay for so called ‘artists primer’ when it’s essentially the same stuff as white Dulux Weathershield !”

Brian made the foreground snow a lighter grey still, with a touch of cadmium orange, filling in the shadow area with a darker grey. Then to the horses. He began painting in the horses' manes black and their flanks in brown, with whiter splashes to give them some shine, and their fetlocks in black. Finally some green vegetation with yellow plants randomly placed coming through the snow, each with its own small shadow.

Peeling off the masking tape round the edge Brian left us with a nicely finished picture, together with some ideas on how we might approach the acrylic medium.



Robert McLeish

See the website: www.wessexpictures.com