

Melissa Wishart - Mixed Media semi-abstract Still Life – 14 Nov 2022

The canvas had already been covered in a burnt sienna background base (this is to marry areas together when background shows through). Melissa explained how you need to explore composition as she began this water-based media. She is versatile in Acrylic and Oil based painting and opened our minds to a vast array of approaches in mixed media. You can apply acrylic on top of oil-based paint but not the other way round. 'Open' acrylics remain malleable for longer than cheaper alternatives.



She ran through her tools, palette knife, big and small brushes, rags, and introduced us to her Silicone wedge (an intuitive implement not so easy on detail, use brushes for that) however, great for line, tone, and colour 'mark making'.

She looked down on her still life of grapes orange and lemons. Create your composition using the rule of thirds creating four points and looking for 'S' shapes. She explained opposite and complimentary colours. Ratios, 'father, mother, child', putting paint on and taking off. So much interest is generated by juxtaposition of opposites rough and smooth, hard and soft, opaque and translucent etc. I encourage you not to bleed off all sides, a pleasing wholeness is not just about objects, it's about presence and absence, choose colours to zing, use opposites on the colour wheel.



Her pallet was an old picture frame from a charity shop, being glass it is easy to scrape down when it dries. You can place different colours behind the glass too. She began her mixing with a 'mother ship' of grey and mix all base colours before you start, using the grey as a foundation to all other colours so they work together. Start with basic shapes. You could glue on bits of paper at this point, hot wax, gold leaf etc, it takes a little longer to dry. Be aware that tissue papers fade in time. Paint thick layers and put in blocks of colour. Layering enables you to scrape back. The silicone wedge delivers hard edges so use a rag to soften them up before the acrylic goes hard. You can adopt charcoal to vary the mood and get a balance of shapes. "I like the way these colours are working together it must be the influence of the curtains behind! You can take a bit of licence with colour, no one is going to know".

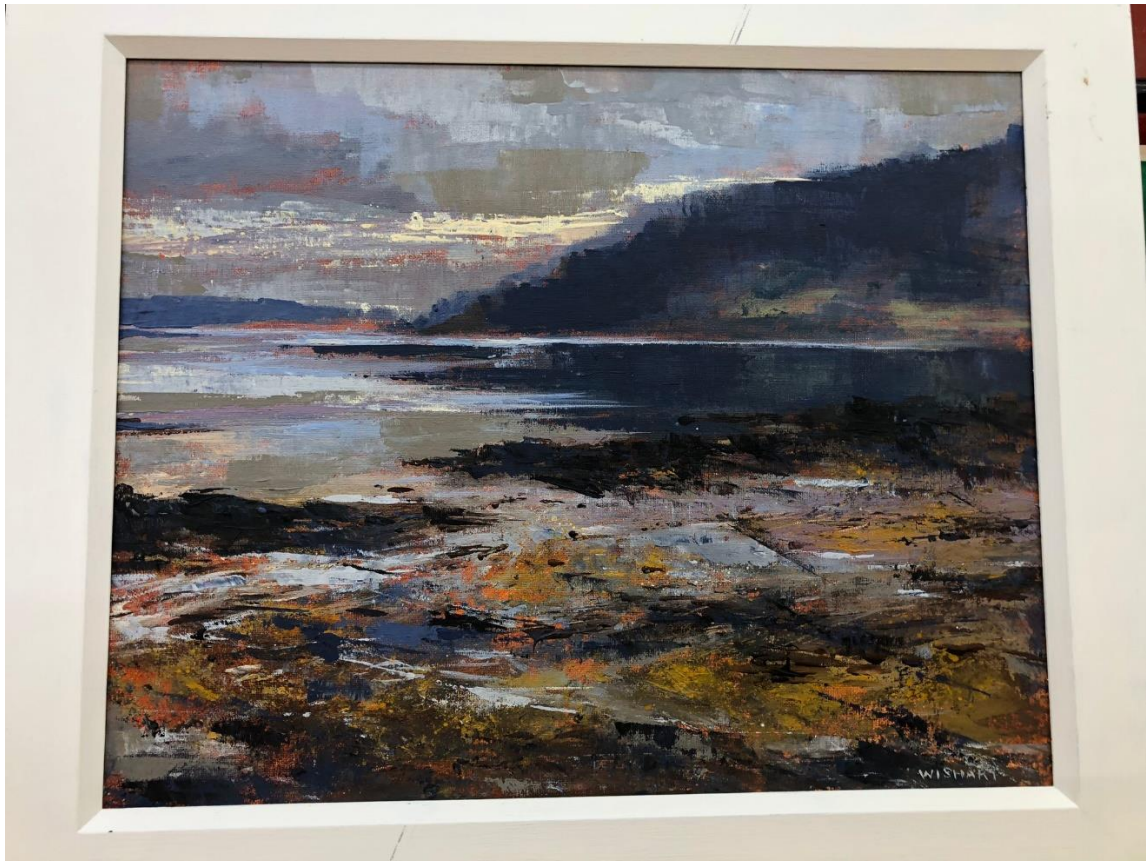


Now see these areas as objects not shapes, treat them as blocks of colour. At this point Melissa works across the canvas to balance out intensity of tone and colour. Put a line on or remove one by scraping, this is where the playful side comes in, she also played with children's jumbo crayons. Dribble colour to move it around, splash it on a la Jackson Pollock. There are no fixed rules about sharp marks verses splattering or using a toothbrush etc.



Remember the painting's viewers need to bring something to the table, you can't force feed them. Semi-abstract give you details in specific areas. Throughout the demo she conducted open dialogue with the audience to debate issues and regularly took questions. At this point she added, "I'm having so much fun, do you want a go?" Her demonstration style was open, approachable and gave us delight.





Brooke Snell

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