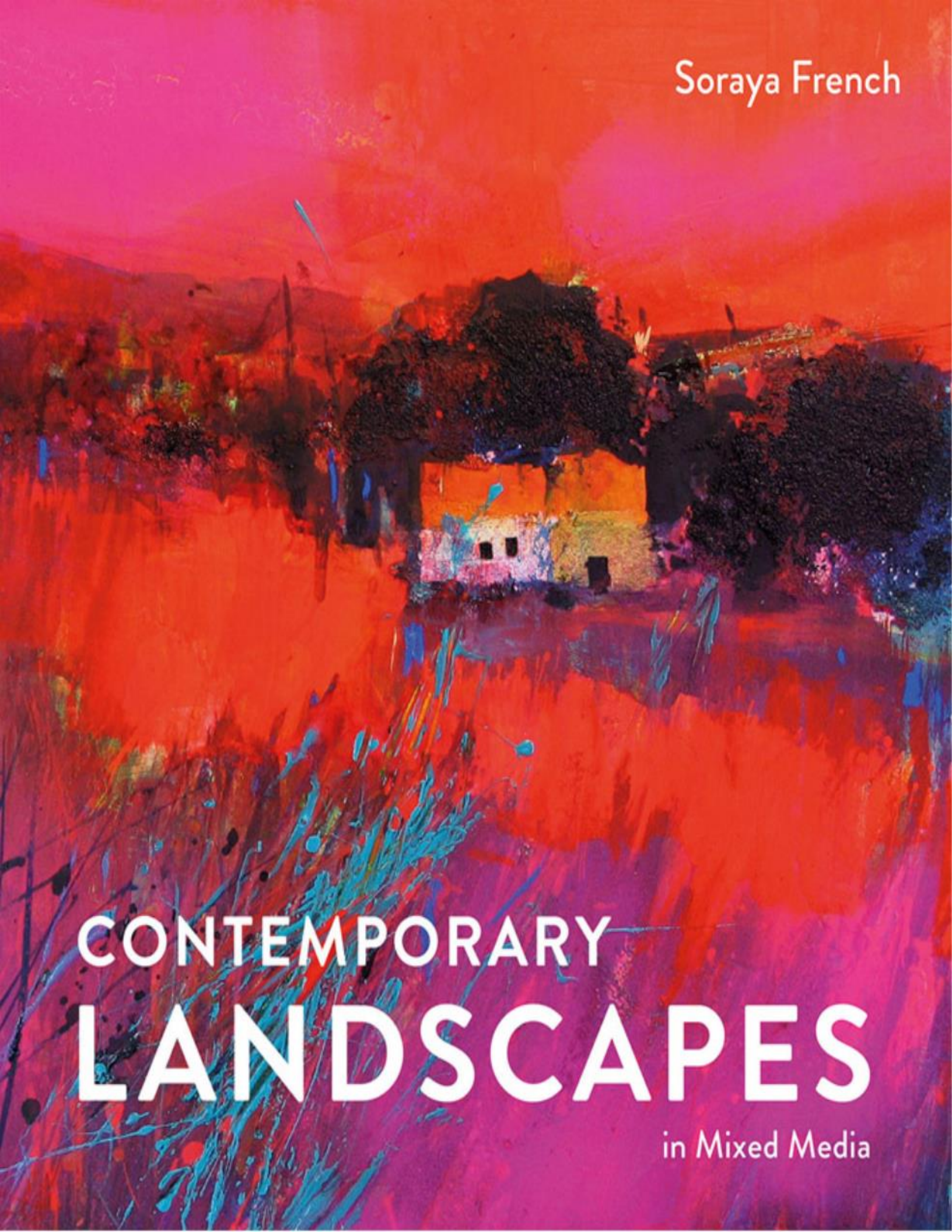




Soraya French

CONTEMPORARY LANDSCAPES

in Mixed Media

An abstract painting featuring a central, small, rectangular structure with a dark roof and a few small, dark openings, possibly windows or doors. The structure is rendered in shades of orange, yellow, and white, contrasting with the surrounding vibrant red and pink background. The background is composed of thick, expressive brushstrokes in various shades of red, pink, and magenta, with some darker, more textured areas in the center. The overall effect is one of intense color and dynamic movement.

Soraya French

CONTEMPORARY

LANDSCAPES

in Mixed Media

Contemporary Landscapes

in Mixed Media





Contemporary Landscapes

in Mixed Media

Soraya French

BATSFORD

Contents

Introduction

1. Materials and techniques

Project 1: Mark-making

2. The creative process

Demonstration 1: Summer meadow

Project 2: Choosing your format

3. Beyond the surface: texture effects

Project 3: Stamps and stencils

4. Collage

Demonstration 2: Caribbean beach

5. Colour through the seasons

Spring

Mixing the greens and fresh colours of spring

Summer

A colour palette of summer meadows and hedgerows

Autumn

Working with the golden colours of Autumn landscapes and woodlands

Winter

Enjoying the colourful greys

Acknowledgments

Index

Introduction



The Scottish Landscape
46 x 56 cm (18 x 22 in)

The broad and multi-dimensional world of making art in mixed media has many wonderful surprises in store to be explored. This form of painting can even be described as the ultimate creative indulgence, where you can take delight in the seductive qualities of transparent media such as inks and watercolours as well as enjoying the versatility

and forgiving nature of the opaque media such as acrylics and pastels. It gives you the chance to use many other mark-making materials too, both traditional and innovative; the infinite combinations offer you tremendous freedom and flexibility to interpret your favourite subjects in unique ways that burst with life and energy.

The aim of this book

I hope that the passion and enthusiasm that has gone into producing this book will in turn inspire those of you ready to take the plunge into the wonderland that is painting in mixed media. Be prepared to open your mind and think beyond the limited boundaries of expressing your ideas in a single medium and the inevitable rules and limitations that go with the territory. The wealth of art materials available and the freedom of expression allowed today create a potent combination for imaginative artists who wish to expand their creative potential and think outside the box of the more traditional disciplines.

Don't feel overwhelmed by the amount of information and the array of art materials within these pages – you don't need them all. Instead, treat the book as a source of reference to try out new ways of using the materials as and when you come across them in your artistic adventures. Equipping yourself with more art materials certainly doesn't equate to being a better painter – in fact it can be rather confusing. The amount of information is to help you make thoughtful choices, not to encourage you to acquire every type of medium available to man. Take what is relevant and appealing to you and leave the rest. Unless otherwise

stated, the acrylic paints and products used in this book are from Golden Artist Colors and the pastels are from Sennelier, but you will find most named colours available from other brands. The watercolour paper is Saunders Waterford from St Cuthbert's Mill.

Mixed media work is often characterized by multiple layers, which give the paintings their rich and interesting visual appeal. You can use the media in an incredibly complex and elaborate manner or go for a simpler, understated approach. Whatever you choose, however, make it your own. Be inventive and explore interpretations unique to yourself. Many of the techniques we enjoy today are the legacies left by the visionary past masters. However, each generation of artists revamps existing ideas to make them fresh and relevant to the present era.

In this book you will find:

- Comprehensive information regarding the materials and some of the possible techniques on their own or in combination with one another.
- Projects to inspire you to try out exercises that will help you to further your knowledge of mixed media.
- Demonstrations to guide you through the stages of painting, either a complex scene or an ordinary subject made more interesting through texture.
- Something of every level of ability for anyone who is ready to take a creative leap forward. The only limit is how far you are prepared to explore.



Violet Sky
38 x 38 cm (15 x 15 in)



Autumn Hedgerow
1 x 25.5 cm (20 x 10 in)

A personal note

This book is a collection of old and new paintings, plus a series of one-off exercises simply to show a particular technique. As a great believer in artistic growth through

experimentation I try not to get too comfortable in any one period of my painting journey, however successful. Getting older has its compensations, too; I am more patient and have learnt to accept what I can or can't achieve and try to enjoy the process regardless of the end result. This breakthrough certainly keeps disappointment at bay and has helped me to survive the inevitable struggles and triumphs that every working artist goes through. I have become increasingly brave at taking risks and am not daunted by the possible failures in order to achieve exciting results and get away from the safe and boring.

My 'eureka' moment in this journey came about accidentally by discovering that painting on a pristine white support and the need for planning ahead had a negative effect on my creativity. Fortunately, by this time I had used each medium on its own for a number of years and I was ready to step into the magical and liberating world of painting in mixed media. This meant that I could indulge in my passion for transparent media as well as enjoying the more controlled and texturizing effects of the opaque materials. I became more spontaneous and felt free from the confines of working in a single medium.

The organic process of painting on a chaotic surface that is marked without being intended for a specific subject matter is truly a fulfilling experience. Manipulating and consolidating the abstract shapes and bringing some kind of order to the chaos is the process I enjoy most. I let the painting evolve naturally and keep an open mind, as I find that too much focus on the end result can be counterproductive and a waste of creative energy.

I am obsessed with pigment and unashamedly confess to being a total colour nerd, but when it comes to my painting, I try to use it intuitively and not let colour theory get in the way of my emotional involvement with the subject. The colourful and painterly style of the Impressionists' paintings mesmerized me as a young student and the artists of the Nabis and the Fauvist movements in particular had a great influence in opening my eyes to the wonderful world of colour. I love and admire artists who use colour in a big-hearted and unselfconscious way. Painting the emotional energy rather than the physical reality of what is in front of me is more important to me than the subject matter. For that reason you won't find specific landmarks or places in my landscapes. My paintings are simply a result of my heartfelt response to the subject through many layers of colour, texture and pattern and I hope that I can transfer the same joyful experience to the viewer.



Summer Hedgerow

53.5 x 51 cm

(21 x 20 in)

Discovering your unique artistic voice

In every genre of art, originality and authenticity are two very important ingredients that set you apart from the crowd. It is important to be identified as an individual artist

and not a paler copy of artists you admire. Fortunately, with regular practice and dedication, your individuality will shine through. Along the way you may emulate artists who inspire you in order to hone your necessary skills of expression, but there comes a time when this practice becomes rather pointless and unsatisfactory and you feel ready to develop your own unique visual language to communicate with your audience. Using your intuition and listening to your most honest inner voice, together with some risk-taking, should help you take a creative leap towards discovering your own unique and resonant voice. However, it is important not to get too secure and comfortable in the style you have found, which can lead to creating stagnant and repetitive art work. To avoid this trap, it is advisable to step out of your comfort zone from time to time and energize your work through experimenting with new ideas. Painting in mixed media should help you tremendously by offering the infinite ways of combining mediums and techniques. The forgiving nature of mixed media and the lack of too many rules should help you become more spontaneous and adopt a more carefree attitude, which is the perfect combination for healthy artistic growth.

Materials and techniques



Daisies on Clifftop
46 x 63.5 cm (18 x 25 in)

Mixed media encompasses a broad range of materials and techniques, and the sheer variety available today can make deciding what to use a daunting task. In this chapter I shall guide you through the maze of different media, explaining their properties and unique characteristics, plus some of the many possible combinations of them. The interplay of different media is the most stimulating and exciting part of

painting in this way. There are no hard and fast rules to limit your creativity, except that technical compatibility should be taken into consideration to ensure the success and ultimately the longevity of your artworks.

Acrylics – the wonder medium

Acrylics come in different levels of viscosity, so the artist can choose whether to employ oil painting techniques with the thicker consistency or use the more liquid forms of fluid acrylics and inks for watercolour techniques – or even combine all viscosities. Indeed acrylic can be described as jack and master of all trades.

This versatility makes acrylics the ideal choice as the main player in a mixed media painting. By nature acrylics dry within a short space of time to allow for many glazes or textural layers to follow. They combine beautifully with other mediums such as all types of pastels; they can make a base for oil colours, combine with collage beautifully and even act as glue.

Acrylics can be used on most surfaces apart from a shiny or greasy support. You can apply thick paint right from the start and glaze with thinner layers without the fear of cracking, or you can start with thinner paint and move on to thicker. This freedom will help you get to grips with acrylics more quickly than with media that come with a set of specific rules.

Gloss or matte mediums can change the sheen and appearance of your acrylics and extend the paint. Pour the required amount in a small container to dip into and mix with your paint. By adding more medium your colours can become quite translucent. When using mediums with your paints, water becomes just the means to wash your brushes in between paint applications.

Most paint manufacturers provide an economical range, known as student grade, and a far superior variety described as artist quality. The latter are slightly more expensive but they have a higher proportion of top quality pigments, which means the paint goes further, while not compromising the quality of your art. Golden Artist Colors advise artists to mix artist quality colours with one of the gels to make them stretch further. Investing in the best artist quality colours, gauging the right amount of water and making expressive brush marks bring out the best in this amazing and versatile medium.



The Edge of the Cornfield

28 x 40.5 cm (11 x 16 in)

This painting is a good example of how you can use heavy body acrylics quite thickly in an impasto style (the foreground) and then slightly dilute them for another passage (the trees) in the same painting.