

Making Everything Easier!™

Acrylic Painting

FOR
DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Utilize acrylics to produce different looks and textures
- Improve your technique with four-color, hands-on instruction
- Complete full-scale projects
- Discover your inner artist

IN FULL COLOR!

Colette Pitcher

Artist and educator



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About the Author

Growing up in Colorado, **Colette Pitcher** always made art — even if at first folks weren't convinced it was art. She majored in television communication at the University of Northern Colorado but had enough art credits to graduate a year early and did so. Her first job out of college was as a graphic designer for an engineering and architectural firm. Her next job was in New York City for a Fortune 500 company, and she later worked for a well-known children's book author. While in New York, she lived at West Point and attained an MBA from the University of Long Island.

She returned to Colorado in 1986 and started Art Department for companies that didn't have an art department in-house. In the 1990s, she founded the Showcase Art Center in Greeley, Colorado, and filled it with other like-minded businesses and art studios. Activities at the Showcase have included Project Ability, for developmentally disabled artists; a workshop for blind artists to use touch in 3-D artworks; and selling art from Mozambique to fund a kindergarten in that country. The Showcase presents art created by youth to encourage future artists and art by seniors to encourage lifelong creativity. It remains a great place to find art and supplies, framing, art-to-wear, piano lessons, art classes, and art studios.

Colette also sculpts. Her husband Gary, owner of Dragon Casting (a bronze art foundry), is also a creative

resource for making the impossible come true daily. Together the couple has installed many monumental bronze public artworks. Colette is the author of *Watercolor Painting For Dummies* (Wiley) and on occasion writes for *PaintWorks* magazine. She also writes and conducts demonstrations for art material manufacturer conventions, including Loew-Cornell, Aamoco, Dynasty brushes, Duncan, Fredrix canvas, and Speedball. She is a Rotarian, a member of Greeley Art Association, a signature member of Colorado Watercolor Society, and an associate member of the National Sculpture Society.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my mother, Beth Irvine. I can never repay her for all she has done for me; heck, she made me what I am, literally. She encouraged, supported, taught, role-modeled, and guided me through life. I could ask for no more or any better.

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I have to thank my better-half husband for letting me type all night and weekend. Gary is always the support that an artist needs to really thrive. Whether it is ordering take-out, or keeping the distractions low, he

was always doing what needed to be done. I owe you a vacation now!

Thanks to my co-workers who fielded phones and customers, cleaned, and kept the business moving forward while I typed: Carol, May, Linda, Robin, and Lesli.

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The best part of art is sharing it, getting to know others, and growing together. Art competitions and the marketplace tend to put artists in a competitive mood. The longer I live, the more ridiculous this has become. We are all in this together, and together we can accomplish anything! Love one another.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Welcome to *Acrylic Painting For Dummies*! You're about to embark on a wonderful journey. Acrylic painting is a fun way to communicate through art, and I love to share the "gospel" of art with others. A real dedication to art changes your life — challenges you, inspires you, and is your companion for as long as you let it be.

Acrylic paints are a great painting choice. They're easy to use and simple to clean up with soap and water, dry quickly, have no toxic fumes, allow you to make changes quickly, and offer many surprise tricks. This book is your ticket to exploring these and other aspects of acrylics.

About This Book

Given its title, you're probably not surprised that this book is all about painting using acrylic paint — painting, as in *you* creating paintings. Although you may get an appreciation of the art of painting by reading this book, there's no substitute for doing. You must paint yourself (that is, you must paint; whether you paint a self-portrait or paint on yourself is up to you). It can not only be one of the most satisfying activities you ever do, but it's also the only way to truly appreciate others' work. It can help you *see* art for the first time with a new appreciation of what you're looking at.

So this book helps you do just that — actually paint. Most chapters offer at least one step-by-step project that incorporates the theory and the techniques introduced in that chapter. After duplicating the paintings, you can try the projects again with subjects of your choosing. Although I give you all the instructions to be successful in painting the exercise, you can also make your own choices at any point. Want to change the painting size, surface, or color? Do it. I encourage you to make the projects your own.

Along with all the painting projects, I also show you how to create interesting effects, compose a good picture, and use color to full advantage — all in an easy-to-access and easy-to-understand format. And I don't use art speak — I just tell you in plain English how to plan, compose, design, and paint. That's what you were hoping for when you picked up this book, isn't it?

Conventions Used in This Book

When writing this book, I used a few conventions to make reading easier:

- ✓ *Italicized* text shows up to define words or terms being used for the first time in that chapter.
- ✓ “Acrylic paints” are often described as just “acrylics”.

- ✓ “Pigments,” “paint,” and “color” are often used to mean the same thing.
- ✓ **Bold** text indicates keywords in bulleted lists or the main instructions in a numbered list.
- ✓ The occasional Web site or e-mail address appears in monofont to help it stand out on the page.

What You’re Not to Read

Throughout the book, you’ll see sidebars that appear in separate boxes. The information in the sidebar may be interesting (and I hope it is), and you may want to read it (and I hope you do), but you don’t need to read it to understand the topic at hand — so you can skip it if you like (and fortunately, I’ll never know if you do). You may just want to flip through the book for the sidebars one day.

The Technical Stuff icons are a similar story — if you like the nuts-and-bolts and historical stuff, check out these interesting tidbits. If you just want to paint already, you can skip ‘em.

Foolish Assumptions

The only assumption I make about you is that you’re interested in acrylic painting. I give you basic information about art in general and acrylics in

particular, so you don't need to know a thing about any art-related topic to benefit from this book. If you picked it up, you're already smart enough.

How This Book Is Organized

I arranged this book into six parts that contain chapters with information related to a common theme.

Although the book reads and leads you logically in order from the beginning to the future of your art, you don't have to read it in order. You can skip around to work on stuff that interests you. Techniques explained in different chapters are cross-referenced so that if you need some technical how-to information, you can turn to that chapter.

You can also use this book as a reference book. You can go to the table of contents or index, look up what you need, and go straight to the relevant page(s). In art you get a lot of information upfront, but you may not be ready for it until you experience that problem. So you may want to read information again after you have painted for a while. You may be painting along when you suddenly realize, "That's what she meant!" Then you can go back to read a section or a chapter to cement the concept in your memory. You'll have many aha moments in your painting career.

Part I: Getting Acquainted with Acrylics

If you've never painted, this part is the place to start. If you have painted, this section may be a good refresher and an explanation of the tools and techniques I use. Every artist has a different setup and approach. In these chapters I share mine and tell you what techniques and practices have worked well for me.

I know you can't wait to get started, so Chapter 1 has a project right away. In Chapter 2, I cover the materials and products you can get in an art store and give you the information you need to ask intelligent questions when choosing your supplies. The world of acrylics includes many additives, mediums, and enhancers, and Chapter 3 sorts out all of those.

Part II: Exploring Tricks and Techniques

Reading this part's chapters and practicing the projects in them gives you a firm grasp of fundamental acrylic skills. Chapter 4 describes basic acrylic techniques (and these skills are actually appropriate with almost any paint) and finishing needs. Chapter 5 launches into fun experimental techniques that yield interesting textures. Chapter 6 gives you a fast drawing course, including the drawing-transferring process you need throughout the book.

Part III: Finding the Fun in Fundamentals

Wonder why some paintings win awards? Hopefully, it's because the artist uses strong design and composition (although sometimes I can't figure out why they win, either — as the adage says, there's no accounting for taste). Design and composition comprise core knowledge or fundamentals that give you the language to discuss art and improve your artistic planning and execution.

The chapters in this part show you how to mix and use color (Chapter 7) and how to use the rules of design (Chapter 8), and then I put it all together to help you make a strong composition (Chapter 9).

Part IV: Acrylic's Versatile Styles

You can use acrylic to imitate several kinds of styles. Chapter 10 explores using acrylic paint like a watercolor: loose, liquid, and in layers. Chapter 11 uses the paint thick and generous like an oil painting, and Chapter 12 lets it all hang out by exploring abstract art.

Part V: Projects for Different Surfaces

Acrylic paint has special properties that allow you to use it as glue, so I explore the art of collage in Chapter 13. Many other kinds of paint have to be paired with certain surfaces, but not acrylic. You can use it on a variety of surfaces, so I discuss the versatile surfaces of decorative arts in Chapter 14.

Part VI: The Part of Tens

The chapters in this part are the icing on the cake. Chapter 15 suggests and describes subjects you may want to paint, and Chapter 16 gives you ideas for jump-starting your artistic passion.

Icons Used in This Book

Like any *For Dummies* book, I've tagged some information with icons to direct your attention to specific text. The icons I use include the following:



This icon tips you off to historical or particularly technical info that's plenty interesting but not essential to the topic.



The text next to this icon shares a tidbit that helps make your art activity easier. Trust me, I've made every mistake already for you, and I want to save you some energy by not having to make the same unnecessary mistakes.



When you see this icon, get out your paints, brushes, and paper to either duplicate a small painting project or try a technique.



This icon gives you a heads-up to remember certain information that may be covered elsewhere but is important to keep in mind.

Nothing you can reasonably do in painting can hurt you (okay, don't eat it), but you may want to avoid