


Your **FULL COLOR**, step-by-step guide to
the fundamentals of painting with oil

Oil Painting

FOR

DUMMIES®



Anita Giddings

*Fine Arts Lecturer and Coordinator of Elective Arts,
IU Herron School of Art and Design*

Sherry Stone Clifton

*Lecturer in Foundation Studies,
IU Herron School of Art and Design*

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®



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**by Anita Giddings &
Sherry Stone Clifton**



WILEY

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Oil Painting For Dummies®

Published by

Wiley Publishing, Inc.

111 River St.

Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2008 by Wiley Publishing, Inc.,
Indianapolis, Indiana

Published by Wiley Publishing, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana

Published simultaneously in Canada

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2007942004

ISBN: 978-0-470-18230-7

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2



About the Authors

Anita Giddings is an artist and educator living in Indianapolis, Indiana. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Herron School of Art and Design and a Master of Fine Arts degree from Indiana State University. Giddings' education and training is in painting but her work also includes sculpture, photography, and installation.

Giddings began formal education in fine art when her high school art teacher, the late Mrs. Elizabeth McCallister, *made* her go to art school. After graduating from Herron School of Art in Indianapolis, she went to graduate school and received her Master of Fine Arts degree in painting.

Giddings began teaching community education classes more than 20 years ago. She particularly enjoys teaching painting and introducing her students to a greater appreciation of art through art making. She is currently a faculty member of Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis and also runs a program of studio classes for non-art students on the campus of Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

Giddings met Sherry Stone Clifton when she returned to Herron to teach, and the two have been friends ever since. When the opportunity came to write this book, Giddings asked Stone Clifton to collaborate with her because of their shared philosophy of teaching.

Sherry Stone Clifton grew up in a family dotted with self-taught artists. Her great-grandfather made little paintings of animals and landscapes on scraps of cardboard cut from box lids. Her mother dressed up furniture and other odds and ends around the house with paintings. Her father retired from a career as a draftsman to work in stained glass.

A scholarship landed her the opportunity to attend art school at Herron School of Art and Design, where she studied printmaking and painting. She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree. After graduation, she taught non-art majors courses in painting and drawing at Herron, beginning a teaching career that has spanned 20 years. She taught community outreach courses for all ages at Herron and the Indianapolis Museum of Art. For several years now, she has been a Lecturer in Foundation Studies at Herron, where she teaches drawing, color, 2-D design, and creative processes for first-year art students. She has earned awards for teaching at Herron and regularly speaks at conferences and publishes articles about teaching beginning art students.

She says that she is first and foremost an artist. She believes that her artwork enhances her teaching and that her teaching enhances her artwork. She has this to say about teaching art:

“This book reflects the ideas about teaching art that I use in my classroom every day: Learn to make art by making it. It’s important to look at actual art by the masters — both old and contemporary. Read about art ideas and techniques. Drawing a little every day and studying design and color will give your painting a strong foundation. An open mind and healthy curiosity about the world is good. Beginning students are very

special to me. They have wonderful hopes and dreams,
and I love helping them make progress toward achieving
them.”

Dedication

To the two women who encouraged me always: my mother Phyllis Giddings and the late Mrs. Elizabeth McCallister. —AG

For my parents, who never once suggested that I study something “practical.” —SSC

Authors'

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank Tim Gallan, Mike Baker, and Sarah Faulkner at Wiley Publishing for help and patience in this project. Our thanks as well to the Graphics and Layout teams at Wiley who helped put this book together. We would also like to thank Vance Farrow, our colleague and technical editor.

We also thank Sara Hook, Lisa Londe, and our colleagues in the faculty and staff at Herron School of Art and Design, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.

Thanks to Lisa Kleindorfer, Heather Shebeck, and Michael Schulbaum for the loan of their paintings. To Carla Knopp, Richard Emery Nickolson, Andrew Winship, Marc Jacobson, and Mary Ann Davis for allowing us to photograph their studios. Thanks to Erin Harper Vernon for help with documenting artwork.

We would also like to thank William Potter, Valerie Eickmeier, and Eric Nordgulen at Herron School of Art and Design for giving us the time and space to complete this book.

Thanks to our own teachers over the years who guided us, to our families, friends, and students for putting up with us during this project, and to our friends at Herron

School of Art and Design, who acted as our sounding board and gave us advice over the past few months.

Publisher's Acknowledgments

We're proud of this book; please send us your comments through our Dummies online registration form located at www.dummies.com/register/.

Some of the people who helped bring this book to market include the following:

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Front Cover Photo: Jerry Driedl/Getty Images

Cartoons: Rich Tennant (www.the5thwave.com)

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[Chapter 19: Ten Artists You Should Know: The Painter's Painters](#)

[Rene Magritte \(1898 - 1967\)](#)

[Wayne Thiebaud \(b. 1920\)](#)

[Mary Cassatt \(1844 - 1926\)](#)

[Jan Vermeer \(1632 - 1675\)](#)

[David Hockney \(b. 1937\)](#)

[Richard Diebenkorn \(1922 - 1993\)](#)

[Euan Uglow \(1932 - 2000\)](#)

[Paul Cezanne \(1839 – 1906\)](#)

[Wolf Kahn \(b. 1927\)](#)

[Frida Kahlo \(1907 – 1954\)](#)

Introduction

Oil painting. The words themselves bring to mind centuries of art. From the masterpieces of the Renaissance to the charming landscapes that you see in a shop on vacation, the rich, glowing colors are fascinating. Oil painting makes it all look like magic. As an artist's material, it both attracts and intimidates with its possibilities. In this book we set out to introduce you to this enduring medium. We want to give you as much information as we can to make oil painting a part of your life.

Whether you're trying oils for the very first time or you're an experienced painter, this book walks you through the ins and outs of oil painting. We cover the basics, and we offer some information for those of you who have pursued this wonderful endeavor for some time.

We include as much information as we can — both in technical matters as well as how to see the world as an artist, as a painter. We know that there are many books on oil painting. What sets this book apart are the step-by-step projects that lead you to the fluent use of color in your paintings. We show you how to depict three-dimensional forms and create dramatic and powerful images. We also include a section that covers design in painting to guide you in the creation of innovative and original artwork. Design is a part of every painting, but

we teach you how to hone your natural design instincts for more effective and creative compositions.

Oil paint is the queen of materials for artists. Painting is what you go to see at the museum; it's what you think of when you hear the word "artist." But oil painting, with its 500-year history, can be intimidating. We give you as much information as possible to get you off to a great start.

Writing this book follows very closely our philosophy as artists and teachers. We firmly believe that the best way to gain an appreciation for fine art is to share in the experience of art making. Learning to paint gives you firsthand experience into what it means to be an artist. You learn not only to paint but also to see the world as artists do. A whole world of painting will open up to you.

About This Book

It's not uncommon for people to teach themselves how to draw. You pick up a pencil and paper and go. But painting often seems like a mystery. Mixing colors, the oils and solvents, so many brushes — where do you start? You see programs on television, but the paintings all seem to come out looking the same. We designed this book with you in mind. Through the lessons in this book we teach you to paint the way YOU paint. We cover the basics of honing your skills and lead you to develop new

ones as you learn color, composition, and how to use oil paint.

Our book has an easy-to-follow format. After some basic lessons based on working from direct observation, you have a chance to create your own designs and approaches to making an oil painting. We try to include everything that you need to learn to paint and to continue to explore painting for years to come.

Our advice to you: Be patient with yourself, and give yourself room and time to experiment. And have fun. Our philosophy is simple. We believe that anyone can learn to paint. If you want it enough, if you can devote a bit of time (two to three hours a week) to this endeavor, and if you're motivated enough to buy the materials and set up an area to work, you can learn to paint.

Now, we'll be honest with you. You have to tolerate being a rookie for a while. You may have some lovely paintings right from the start, but expect to make some awkward, funny-looking paintings until you get the hang of it. But the rewards are great. When you're first learning to paint, every painting shows your increased knowledge.

Conventions Used in This Book

To help you navigate this book we set up a few conventions:

- ✓ We use *italics* for emphasis and to highlight new ideas and terms that we define within the reading.
- ✓ We use **boldface** text to indicate a set of numbered steps (you follow these steps for many of the projects). We also use boldface to highlight keywords or phrases in bulleted lists.
- ✓ The main painting projects in the book have their own project headings so that you can easily identify them as you flip through the chapters. Ancillary projects are flagged with the Try It icon.
- ✓ Every project tells you what you need, when you need it. Before you start any project, read all the way through the steps to make sure that you have the supplies you need.

What You're Not To Read

We wrote this book so that you can find information easily. We put absolutely everything that we could think of into this book and we believe that it's all essential information to help you learn to paint with oil. But you can skip over some material. Some info is more technical or describes a particular approach that may not apply to every situation. Feel free not to read the following:

- ✓ **Text in sidebars:** Sidebars (those gray-shaded text boxes) allow us to include every possible thing associated with oil painting. Although they include

useful information, they aren't entirely necessary reading.

✓ **Anything with the Technical Stuff icon attached:** This information is interesting but not critical to your understanding of the topic at hand.

In addition, we know that you probably won't read this book in exact sequential order. In fact, for most of you, skipping over Part I completely and going to Part II first is the best way to proceed. This method gets you started painting right away. You can use Part I as a reference for any questions that you have about supplies, tools, your work area setup, and so on.

We want to believe that you'll soak up every word we wrote. But we know that much of it may be too arcane to absorb in the initial reading. We hope that you keep this info in mind as your skills develop and use our book as a resource in the future.

Foolish Assumptions

In writing this book, we made some assumptions about you, our dear reader:

✓ You have the desire to pursue fine art painting, creating your own images, and attempting to make the type of paintings that you see in a museum or in art history books, as opposed to using oil paint for craft applications.

- ✓ You've had experience with drawing, either self-taught or from lessons you received at some point in your life. We assume that you can look at something and draw a recognizable image of it.
- ✓ You may know little about art history, but you have an interest and an appreciation for what you have encountered.
- ✓ You know nothing about painting or you may have tried to figure out oil painting on your own and not made much progress. We assume that you may have tried to paint with oils on your own but are looking for direction.

This book is basic enough to help the rookie painter painlessly figure out the ins and outs of painting with oils. If you're nervous about your drawing skills, it's possible to learn to paint while you develop your drawing skills.

If, on the other hand, you know a bit about this topic already, you'll still find something challenging to pursue. We also include projects and approaches for the individual with more art experience. Check out the chapter headings to look for specific topics or painting projects to hone your skills. And if you have painted before, don't be surprised if you find some info in the basic lessons that fill in any gaps in your knowledge.

How This Book Is Organized

This book is set up intentionally to be user-friendly. We try to cover topics from buying supplies to step-by-step painting projects to developing paintings with creativity and originality. Each part focuses on a different piece of the painting process.

Part I: Getting Your Feet Wet in Oil Paint

In this section you find an overview of everything you need to get started, from buying the materials to setting up a place to work. We also cover the painting process and setting goals for learning to paint. We cover some of these things in more detail later in the book, but start here to get the big picture.

Part I isn't intended to be a step-by-step lesson; instead, it's more of a reference to get you started with your supplies, paintings, and all the physical things that you need to get in order to paint. If you want to start painting right away, you can start with Part II, but be sure to flip to Part I when you need to look up details.