

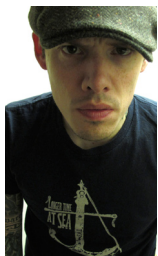


3324 NORTH CALIFORNIA

BY JASON SEILER

JOB TITLE: Illustrator

SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop CS



INTRODUCTION

Many artists can draw a decent likeness of a well-known face, but the challenge is more in capturing not just the likeness but the character of the person as well. For

me, capturing this truth, or essence, is the most important factor in considering a portrait successful or not. By observing the unique qualities of the individual, I am able (hopefully) to render a realistic depiction beyond mere likeness. One of my favorite ways to do this is through exaggerated form; the slightest push of an expression or posture in just the right place can tell the viewer quite a bit, as well as make for a more interesting image.



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“DOING THUMBNAILS IS A SIMPLE AND QUICK WAY FOR ME TO FIND INTERESTING COMPOSITIONS AND EXPLORE CHARACTER SHAPE AND PROPORTION”

I am a traditional painter at heart. I love working with oil, acrylic and watercolor. However, due



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to the fast-paced world of publishing, I have taught myself how to paint digitally using a Wacom21" Cintiq. The Cintiq allows me to work naturally, intuitively drawing and painting directly on the LCD display (Fig.01).

MY PAINTING

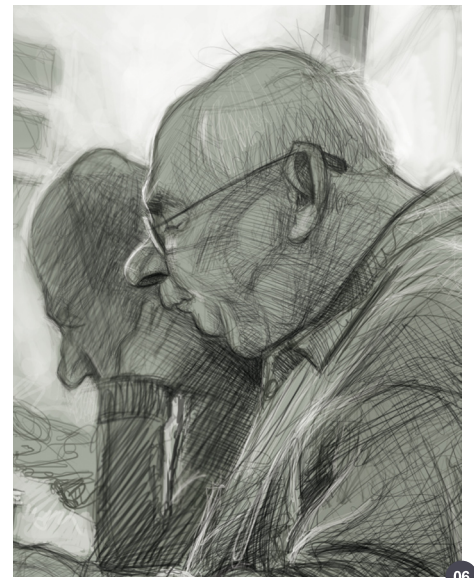
My technique when painting digitally is very similar to the way I paint with oils or acrylics. I tend to work from dark to light, focusing on values and color harmony. I never use any form

of photo manipulation. The work that I create digitally is hand-drawn and painted. Working digitally has its advantages for both myself and art directors as there is no fuss or time spent scanning and color correcting. It also provides the ability to make changes quickly and easily, and the time it takes me to create a painting digitally versus traditionally is cut in half. The best part is that the final result looks like a traditional painting. The results are so similar that people often confuse my traditional and digital paintings, unable to tell which is which.

Before beginning a piece I generally create several thumbnail sketches (**Fig.02 – 04**).

Doing thumbnails is a simple and quick way for me to find interesting compositions and explore character shape and proportion. I use my thumbnail sketches like short-hand notes. I don't share them with art directors, unless they ask, as they can be confusing to anyone but myself. After developing the thumbnails, I quickly move on to the sketch.

By this stage, having the idea and composition set, I begin to take pictures for reference. Using friends and myself as models, I can control the lighting, folding in clothing, poses, hand gestures and expressions (I have used my own face many times for creating expression for



my subjects; it pays to have a rubber face!). After gathering all the references I need, I do a final sketch (**Fig.05 – 06**). I love to draw and because I believe that drawing is the foundation for my art, I take special care to get it just right. If the drawing is right, the painting will be right. A strong drawing and composition must come first. I often prefer sketching on a toned background as opposed to white. This helps me lay down my line work and quickly establish light and darks, giving my sketch depth and a life of its own in a very short amount of time.





Once the sketch is approved, I prepare it for painting. I typically cover my entire sketch with a thin layer of raw umber, using the sketch in the same way an under-painting is utilized in traditional painting (**Fig.07**). My paintings tend to have a lot of detail, but don't let that fool you. The details are only the final touches. The most important thing is the drawing, and once that meets with my satisfaction I focus on capturing light and establishing strong values.

“ I DIDN'T WANT TO KEEP IT TIGHT AND WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE PIECE AS A WHOLE, IT LOOKS PHOTOREALISTIC. BUT WHEN YOU ACTUALLY LOOK CLOSELY YOU CAN SEE THAT THE PAINTING WAS BUILT, ALMOST SCULPTED, ONE BRUSH STROKE AT A TIME

Before I start to paint I create a palette of colors that I will use throughout the painting process. These colors are not pre-mixed to match the exact colors that I will need. Instead, they are colors that I typically use when painting traditionally, like Yellow Ochre,

Cadmium Yellow/Red, Alizarin Crimson, French Ultramarine Blue, black and white. I will mix these colors together to get what I need for the painting and then I'll click on the color picker to bend or change the color if need be. I can easily add warms or cools, saturate or desaturate. Sometimes I'll begin by blocking in a series of warm grays that I've created, primarily focusing on getting the values how I want them. Once I've established my values, I begin adding light washes of color over my grays. I'll do this on another layer so that I can use the Eraser tool to softly erase certain areas, enabling me to blend my color into the grays seamlessly (**Fig.08**).



Once I have my colors pretty much blocked in, I'm ready to zoom in closer to work on rendering the details (**Fig.09**). This is the part that takes the longest because not only do you have to focus on getting the color temperature and values right, you also have to pay attention to anatomy, structure and character alongside soft edges, reflective light and so on. I can easily spend hours and hours rendering, so I have to have a plan so I know how far I want to go with the particular piece that I am working on. For this piece, I didn't want to keep it tight and when you look at the piece as a whole, it looks photorealistic. But when you actually look closely you can see that the painting was built,



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almost sculpted, one brush stroke at a time. I think of painting in a similar way to putting together a puzzle. As mentioned earlier, this painting looks photorealistic when looked at as a whole because the correct values and colors were laid down next to other correct values and colors. If you look closely at the stop lights and stickers on the glass to the left of the man in shadow, you can see how simple the brush work is – there's nothing fancy about it. In fact if I were to crop it and share it close up and out of context, it wouldn't really be much to look at. This is how I work, section by section. Each section on its own wouldn't be particularly special, but together they create a neat picture (Fig.10 – 13).

I often get asked about the software and types of brushes that I use. I have not yet bought the latest version of Photoshop but plan to, eventually. The truth is I don't need all that much. In fact, the version of Photoshop that I currently work with, and have worked with for years, is just plain old Photoshop CS. It does all that I need in order to create a painting. The brushes that I use are Photoshop brushes. #24 is my favorite because it is "brushy" and I can get painterly effects with it, but I also like using the Round brushes. If used correctly they can lend a painting a layered watercolor effect that I enjoy. I feel that it is really important for digital artists to paint traditionally, even if only for personal practice. The more you paint with real paint, like watercolor and oil, the easier digital painting will become.



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Because of my experience with painting in oil and acrylic, painting digitally comes naturally; mixing color digitally is done basically the same way it is done traditionally, only more easily and quickly. It can be a temptation for digital painters to get carried away and create near photorealistic results, but, for me, this approach is against all that I love about painting. I enjoy

finding a thumbprint on a painting or seeing loose hairs from a paintbrush entombed forever in the art. I purposely leave brush marks visible, knowing that as long as the lighting and values are correct, the painting will still have a very realistic look and quality alongside its traditional feel.



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