



# Brush Strokes



By Mary Baumgartner

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## HOLDING THE VIEWER'S INTEREST IN PORTRAITS

Normally when painting a portrait of a person, the placement of that person is right in the middle. Try something new.

When I started the painting, “*Charley and His Chicks*,” the thought process was to put him in a painting most suitable to one of his pastimes. And that was of course raising his chickens (and geese).

This painting evolved from the desire to paint chickens. Now that I’m a Southern Belle, the subjects I choose to paint are becoming local as well. Charley takes great joy in tending his chickens and I think that is seen on his face.

Portrait painting in watercolor can be very difficult. Like any medium, however, the painting must look like the person you are observing. Since Charley could not come to a studio and look natural surrounded by his flock, I had to paint from a photograph made in his suburban back yard. He and his family were very pleased with this view of Charley since they see him there a lot.

Many of the watercolor portraits I have seen show the person with skin that is far too white or too opaque. I call them paintings of cadavers. Brutal? Yes, but with another layer or two of transparent watercolor, skin color can be matched perfectly. While you are painting skin, just hold your hand next to the hand or face in the painting and see how well they match. Of course you have to be influenced by the amount of light on your subject.

Using the colors I recommend in my book, *Wonderful World of Watercolor*, I start with Cadmium Red, adding to it Raw Sienna and then Cobalt Blue. These colors are each brought to the surface of the mixing palette and each mixed into the other in quantities that replicate skin color if you are painting Caucasian skin. If you are painting African American skin or some Latin American person, I recommend you use Winsor Blue with the above mix instead of Cobalt.

You’ll notice how colorful the chickens are. I love color, so I mixed the colors as I saw them in my mind’s eye. They might not exactly be Charley’s chickens but they are mine if I owned any.