



Brush Strokes



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THE EYES HAVE IT!

This photo recently appeared in a newspaper in Vero Beach, FL. It was sent to me by a fellow painter who is on vacation. The photograph says a lot, but not quite all. The eyes are the entry into the soul, whether it be a person, bird, reptile or domestic animal. Knowing how to paint these eyes is the place to start.



Shown on the left is a small portion of a 20"x 28" painting that I just finished

which underscores the above comment. The little girl's eyes say it all. And the eyes of the little bunny rabbit are the next place we look because eyes are captivating.



To begin with, all eyes are different colors. When painting a person you need to know that the painting will be completed, so I always begin with the eyes and the face. If I get that right, then I know I can paint the rest of the painting; however, this little girl's portrait was the most difficult I have ever painted. She was playing "dress-up" and wearing a flowing dress which was far too large on her. Painting all the folds and the other props involved became a very long project.

Back to the "how to." I always start with shaping the eyes into a round orbit. The appearance of an almond shape is formed by the folds of the eyes as they surround the marble-like orbit. The first layer of the colored part of the eyes should be burnt sienna, leaving the light spot where the highlight will be. Regardless of the final color, the burnt sienna will make the eyes glow. As you can see from the animals shown above right, even though they appear gold in color the eyes first have the burnt sienna wash.



The next step is to place other color in the eyes, such as a brown made from ultramarine blue and brown madder. If the eye color is gold, the color would be raw sienna. If the eyes are blue or green, another color would be selected such as cobalt or cerulean. Most cat's eyes have several colors, including the gold. Pupils are painted last, and in cats, they attach to the upper lid with some space left below the pupil. Some birds' pupils are painted the same. Light can be scraped out with the end of a blade going into the dark pupil to leave the white spot. In people's eyes, it is better to paint around the light spot so that it can have soft edges. This gives more softness to the eyes.