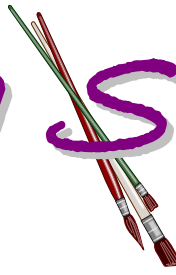




Brush Strokes



By Mary Baumgartner

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A NEW LOOK FOR A NEW YEAR

It's 2014 and what are YOU, the artist going to do about it? First pick out a subject you have always wanted to paint, but something that feels way out of your range of ability.

Second, make small drawings about the size of the painting shown—at least four of them—in order to get a preview of what works best. Begin each drawing with a center of interest, good values and especially think “composition.” Remember, the lightest light should be near the darkest dark. After these small drawings are finished, lay them side by side and choose which one is the best composition.

Had you ever thought of what catches the eye of the viewer? Quoting Robin Berry of the Transparent Watercolor Society of America, “Value catches my eye first. To my way of thinking, light, made to shine by shadow, is the element that makes the difference in a well-designed painting. Once the values are designed, the artist is free to use color and texture in nearly infinite ways.” Another quote by Jan Fabian Wallake of the Watercolor Art Society: “I look for excellence in composition...confident brushwork, a distinct approach to a subject and a display of the uniqueness of the medium.” Another quote from the Canadian Society of Painters in Watercolor, Karen Richter says: “When jurors select work for inclusion in an exhibition, they look for technical proficiency, good design, good composition and a message.” Note the mention of composition and value in these quotes from jurors who are well-known artists nationwide.

Looking for a subject to paint is the easiest. Designing it to reflect what made you look in the first place is an element that requires making sketches first and then finding the focal point and then filling in the darks and lights next to each other. I use the side of a pencil to produce at least 5 values in all my sketches. There are sets of value pens for sale at art stores everywhere made by Prismacolor but of course when my idea strikes, I'm so excited I can't even bear to go to the studio and pull out my art markers.

The painting above was created from my backyard garden and the constant visits by the bumblebees for a taste of the nectar. The writing spider felt the same way as he built his trap nearby. I painted the spider en plein air since the bees and blossoms were my focal point and the spider was a secondary. I named it “Bumblebee Passiion” after the Passion Vine. Now get in there and draw, paint and critique your work! Don't let another day go by! Make 2014 a New Year with a New and Improved Look!

