

David W. Mayer Masterworks of New Mexico – Workshop Schedule and General Overview

Thursday, April 22, 2010:

- **Classroom:**
 - Introductions
 - Review of basic approach to design
 - Composition
 - Shapes and Simplified Masses
 - Use of Limited (3-4) Values
 - Discussion of Carlson's 4 planes of the landscape
 - Overview of "Laying In" Oil Paint
 - Fat over lean (thick over thin)
 - Painting shapes and patterns
 - Showing reality with details at the edges of patterns
 - Limited Color Palettes
 - Use of Grays
- **Outdoors:**
 - Subject selection and composition/pattern/value sketches
 - Painting the selection

Friday April 23, 2010:

- **Classroom:**
 - Review and critique of first day work -- related to basics
 - Composition
 - Shapes and Simplified Masses
 - Use of Limited (3-4) Values
 - Selected "Paintovers" of student paintings.
- **Outdoors:**
 - I will do a demonstration painting during the day. You may watch or pant.
 - Subject selection and composition/pattern/value sketches
 - Painting the selection
 - Mixing "color puddles" to match 4-6 basic colors in nature and using your grays
 - Painting the selection

Saturday April 24, 2010:

- **Classroom:**
 - Review and critique of second day work -- related to basics
 - Composition
 - Shapes and Simplified Masses
 - Use of Limited (3-4) Values
 - Selected "Paintovers" of student paintings.
- **Outdoors:**
 - Subject selection and composition/pattern/value sketches
 - Painting the selection
 - Mixing "color puddles" to match 4-6 basic colors in nature and using your grays
 - Emphasis on laying in oil paint to fit patterns/shapes
 - Rendering nature's objects
 - Painting the selection

IMPORTANT NOTE: If the weather is bad please be prepared to bring at least 6-8 good quality 8x10 photo prints that we will use to paint subjects indoors.

Course Overview:

I have designed this "plein air" oil painting workshop for beginners and intermediate painters who wish to take their painting skills to the next stage. Students will be working both indoors and outdoors.

The workshop will focus not so much on painting specific things (trees, mountains, lakes, etc.), but rather on painting the proper shapes, values, colors and textures directly from nature. The end result is a far better painting than if students set out to paint "things"!

The emphasis of this workshop will be on the basics aspects of painting:

- **Understanding the three-value system for design and composition**
- **Creating compositional patterns and "shape maps"**
- **Developing quick value sketches of the desired patterns and shapes**
- **Understanding the concept of the value range of highlights, midtones, shadows and dark accents**
- **Learning how to "lay down" oil paint to reach the visual goals of the painting. The focus is on placing the right paint colors and thicknesses into the correct "shape areas" and then finalizing the rendering of details.**

I'm certain that you will be a much more accomplished painter at the end of these 3 days! The workshop is limited to number of students so that you will have plenty of personal attention.

I will do several demonstration paintings outdoors as well as present some of my work and discuss the composition and painting techniques employed. Students will then paint at their own easels. There will be individual critiques to help each artist solve problems and several group critiques throughout the workshop. One session may be done in the early morning or later afternoon to take advantage of the different light conditions depending upon the weather.

Plus, while some artists always tell you that there are no secrets except "hard work" (which is certainly required), I will share some of the real professional "secrets" to getting your paintings to a much more advanced state in a far shorter time.

Materials

Quality supplies make for a quality workshop experience. Please don't spend the money required for workshop registration, transportation, lodging and meals, and then try to save a few dollars on materials. You will just create extreme frustration for yourself in what should be a wonderful and creative learning environment.

Paint:

Please avoid "student" grade paints and purchase ONLY professional-grade oil paints. The big difference in quality has to do with how much pigment is used. A student quality paint uses fillers, extenders and far less pigment than professional paints. We won't use that much paint in the workshop that it makes a big difference in cost anyway. Good professional brands at reasonable prices are Gamblin, Holbein and Windsor Newton (not their Winton grade).

A limited palette is best, so here are my "very limited" palette suggestions:

- Cadmium Red Medium or Light
- Ultramarine Blue
- Yellow Ochre
- Cadmium Yellow Medium or Light
- White

This "very limited" palette will give you the opportunity and challenge to see and mix colors (greens especially) without the aid of a large color palette. You'll begin to appreciate this limited palette the more you paint!!

If you prefer to paint with a more extended palette, here is a good one:

- Yellow Ochre
- Cadmium Yellow Medium or Light
- Cadmium Red Medium or Light
- Venetian Red or Terra Rosa (medium rusty red)
- Alizarin Crimson Permanent
- Ultramarine Blue
- Cobalt Blue
- Viridian Green
- Sap Green
- Titanium Zinc White

Sketching Materials: (Required for value studies)

- 5x8 inch or 8x10 inch drawing tablet
- 2 black “Sharpie” marker pens (must have)
- Broad tip gray felt tip markers, in values 2, 5 and 8 (optional)
- Soft drawing pencil

Brushes:

My recommendation is to bring quality natural bristle “brights” (these are the shorter of the two popular styles of bristle brushes as the longer “flats” can be harder to control) in sizes 4, 6, 8 and sometimes 10. The brand I like best is Daler-Rowney’s “Signet Robert Simmons” 40B series.. Also bring a small round or liner brush for details.

Expensive sable brushes in brights and flats do not last when scrubbing with oils and please DO NOT bring synthetic fiber brushes or even part synthetic as the resulting brush strokes are so hard and artificial as to make even the best paintings look amateurish.

Painting and Palette Knives:

I also use a small painting knife, very narrow and tapered to a point, a tool I find to be invaluable for painting and cleaning my palette. Regular “palette” knives are too round and blunt to be used for painting, only for mixing paint and cleaning your palette.

Canvas or Linen Panels:

I like a quality, oil or alkyd primed linen canvas laid down on a panel or board, especially when working outdoors because they’re easier to transport. If you have not used oil-primed linen before, you will fall in love with the magic way that paint handles on this surface!

Please try to AVOID the acrylic primed cotton canvas panels, especially the cheap Fredrix ones mounted on cardboard as that will make it very difficult for you to apply paint correctly and will take away from a quality workshop experience.

Since we have a limited amount of actual painting time and consistent sunlight in the field, I suggest you work with small panels in sizes 8x10, 9x12 or 11x14 at the largest. Please DO NOT bring larger panels or stretched canvas as stretched canvas can allow the light to shine through from the back and make it very difficult to paint. Several very fine sources of linen panels, in order of cost, are:

- Wind River Arts (<http://www.windriverarts.com>)
- New Traditions Art Panels (www.newtraditionsartpanels.com)
- Raymar (www.raymarart.com)
- SourceTek (www.CanvasPanels.com)

I prefer the Wind River Arts and New Traditions panels as they are slightly less expensive for the same quality linen (Claessens) and are mounted on strong but light weight foam core panels.

Easels and Paintboxes

When considering an easel or paintbox, again, quality counts. If a French easel is your preferred choice, buy the original Julian if you don't already have one, and consider the half size because it's easier to transport.

However I much prefer a "pochade" (poe-shod) paintbox for the light weight, ease of setup and the ability to store (in most types) several wet panels inside the box. The pochade setup I use is a 9x12 Maier Pochade Box manufactured by Open Box M (www.OpenBoxM.com). These come in a variety of sizes, so choose the one that's best for you.

Umbrellas and Mounts

You should also strongly consider bringing a painting umbrella as its It's hard to judge color and value on a brightly lit surface and its not always possible to both get in position to paint a great composition and still have the light not hit your painting panel and palette.

A flexible umbrella mount may also be required, and great ones are made by Bogen and sold by Open Box M.

Panel Carriers

If we do 2-3 paintings each day, you may end up with 6-9 paintings over the course of the workshop and would need an extra wet panel carrier even if you are using a pochade box. If you are using a Julian-style easel you will need several wet panel carriers. Wind River Arts, Open Box M, Raymar and others art supplies companies (search the Internet) offer an assortment of boxes designed to carry wet paintings.

Other Supplies

- Portable brush washer, with a good tight, leak-proof seal such as the Holbein airtight brush canister for your mineral spirits.
- Odorless mineral spirits (purchase locally)
- Drawstring garbage bags
- Paper towels (lots of them, also purchase locally)
- Lunch and water

Shipping Materials via the Airlines

With the current airline security requirements, students obviously cannot ship solvents and mineral spirits or anything flammable. For your oil paints, please preprint (in clear letters) and include in your kit the following statement:

"This Kit Contains Artist-Grade Oil Colors:

Non Hazardous – Contains No Solvent – Made from Vegetable Oils"

Reading Lists

Here are some quite excellent books to read in preparation for this workshop:

- **"Fill Your Oil Paintings With Light & Color" (Paperback)** by Kevin D. MacPherson
- **"[Oil Painting: The Workshop Experience](#)"** by Ted Goerschner and Lewis Barrett Lehrman
- **"Composition of Outdoor Painting"** by Edgar Payne
- **"[Carlson's Guide to Landscape Painting](#)"** by John F. Carlson

In fact, if you purchased and read these great books, you may never need another book to enhance your career!