

Neomosaic-Advanced Description

Day 1

Welcome to my complicated process! The first six layers of paint are fun and easy. Anyone can do what I do to begin. Once the mark making is engraved in the molding paste, the three layers of iridescent colours applied and the six colours of paint distributed semi-randomly using a throwing technique loosely following the notan value distribution, we dive deep into the ever-fascinating world of negative space.

In the beginning the student is introduced to molding paste using a spatula for somewhat even leveling over the canvas surface. A selection of tools such as plastic onion bags, lids of different sizes, fine tooth and coarse tooth combs or anything else can be used to make marks in the paste. This must dry before we apply a gel/gesso/complementary colour mix. Using a mix of complementary colours in the gesso combination, the dominant two in our reference photo, ensures a cohesive bonding for the rest of the painting. Once this layer is dry, we lay in individual tints made up of one complementary colour in a mix of gel and iridescence. We need rubber gloves for this part. Each layer must dry before the next can be added. In my studio I usually have at least two to six canvases at different stages on the go at once so drying is not a problem.

We have one more fun layer before we get to work. The groundwork for the paint-throwing is a notan study of values from our photo. Using our sketchbook, we run off several 2x3in sketches in pencil with the goal of finding an interesting pattern of light and dark. Details are not important only patterns. It is an exercise in abstract thinking. If we do not have an interesting under plan the painting will not work well. We can spend time on this waiting for paint to dry. We can also prepare our premixed colours at this time as well. Using a mix of GAC 100 and Liquitex gloss medium and varnish with a little water we create bottles of pure colour and variations of complementary mixes. We need two sets of complementary colours. I often choose blue and orange with red and green. One forms the basis for most of the painting the other adds a little pizzazz. We will need ten bottles and ten brushes in our throwing room. Throwing the paint especially in the areas we have chosen to be dark we encourage the paint to run in rivulets over the surface using a spray bottle. Not too much and not everywhere. We want those lines to be visible, not glommed together. Let this dry overnight.

Day 2

Now the work begins. I use a poppy red watercolour pencil to indicate the major forms in the image. It is important to use this only as a guide as following the texture and paint rivulets takes precedence while we create our painting. The spaces between are where we place the colours and the values. Gazing at the spaces with the image in mind we select our beginning carefully. We need a range of values early in the process, so I usually begin with a light sky filling in the blanks with the original gesso mixture. Placing the lightest forms accurately may require a measuring tape especially if the rule of thirds is considered important. Depending on the liquidity of the paint a horizontal surface may be required so the darkest darks can be puddled in place. A mirror above proves helpful to get a better view farther away. It is like backing up

only we do not go anywhere. Value adjustments can be made with different colours along the rivulets. The less fussing the better. I have had several restarts from the gesso stage because I covered too much. The under painting makes it sing.

Varia - not part of the workshop

I write a poem for each piece which is copied into the image with felt pen and a quote from the Bible is inscribed with metallic pen. I also add three metal circles in appropriate place as a final touch. Once I am happy with my image, I use a spray workable varnish to stabilize the watercolour pencil, the felt pen and the metallic pen. Usually, I leave it overnight before I apply the isolation coat (Liquitex gloss varnish and medium). Two coats of removeable varnish follow (Golden polymer UVL gloss varnish). The wire hanging may be installed early as I prefer to use an easel while I work. Backing up often is very important. On the back of the canvas I write, usually in pencil, the name of the work, media, my name, inventory number, poetry and Biblical reference. I use 6mm plastic sleeves labelled with the name, size and inventory number as well as my contact information for safe transportation. The paintings are easily inserted and removed as needed.