

Perfect Planning Prevents Poor Performance – Part 2

By Dalerie Patterson

Our special art tutor in Queensland has prepared this article about fixing problems in unsatisfactory paintings, as the second episode in our regular 'Art Clinic' feature.



This is the second part of Art Clinic 2. Do you have last month's article beside you? Good! In Part 1, I explained how 'Perfect Planning' for this project was

a result of: Knowledge of the basic principles; and rearranging the elements of the composition into a pleasant design that will become the essential basis for our rejuvenated painting.



Artist B's painting.

I would also like to remind you that the painting style of this project could be completed in a number of ways. It certainly lends itself to a realistic and detailed execution. Because of time restraints I will have to choose a slightly loose and almost impressionistic approach. Why don't you use the sketch from last month to create your own impression of this subject? Email your photographs to our Editor, Trevor Lang (ap@woodlandspublishing.com.au). Maybe we could feature a mini gallery of your versions in a future issue of the magazine.

I am using Genesis Heat Set Oils. You will note that I have now dropped Burnt Sienna from my palette and instead included Quinacridone Crimson. My only medium is Sansodor/Thinning Medium. My palette for this painting is: Titanium White; Ultramarine Blue; Dioxazine Purple; Yellow Ochre; Genesis Yellow; Quinacridone Crimson; Quinacridone Magenta; and Sap Green.

Note: If you don't have Dioxazine Purple, simply mix Ultramarine Blue and Quinacridone Magenta.

Those painting in oils can substitute Cadmium Yellow for Genesis Yellow and a mixture of Cadmium Red Deep and Pilbarra Red for Quinacridone Crimson.

SKY AND HILLS

First up, I repainted the sky in the same colour as the undercoat. Using a bristle bright, I applied a thick layer of paint without any medium with loose, cross-hatch brush strokes. Moving on to the hills, I wanted a soft colour – so I used a mixture of White, Ultramarine Blue and Dioxazine Purple to create the distant atmosphere on the extreme right. A darker version of this colour was applied to the shadows. Quinacridone Crimson was added on the lower right of the hill to create the dark section as indicated on the sketch. Using a clean 5mm bristle bright, I dabbed in the highlight with White, Yellow Ochre and Quinacridone Crimson for the top section of the hill.

A little Sap Green was added to this mix on the same brush for the highlights on the lower slopes.

I deliberately painted around the area for the two poplars on the left, so they could be painted over a white background.

THE POPLARS

The darker (left) side of the poplars was this same colour, but it was applied with the edge of a small fan brush. The script liner etched in the trunk and branches with a little more Quinacridone Crimson to this mix. Highlights of White, Yellow Ochre and a little Quinacridone Crimson were applied with a clean fan brush to the right side.

Make sure you do not have just the darks on the left, the trunk up the centre and the lights on the right. Some of the branches come straight towards you so they cover the trunk and are dabbed in with the highlight colour.

LEFT BACKGROUND

To create the grassy slope at the base of the trees, I used the brush with the same colour as the lower highlights on the hill (allow this colour to blend seamlessly into the darks on the lower slopes and then ease it off into a dry brush/underpainting effect just a little lower than the base of the house). The highlight of Sap Green, Yellow Ochre, Genesis Yellow and White was applied with a clean fan brush, stronger in parts and then blending in more with the previous coat. I also decided to add in a darker bush peeping around from the side of the building. This addition gives some contrast to both that end of the building and the post on the porch.

TWIGGY TREE

The fine tree on the right was next, and for this I used a mixture of White, Quinacridone Crimson and Ultramarine Blue.

Select your fine long-haired script liner brush. Dip into the Sansodor and then draw the brush towards you through your mix, twisting the hairs



First application on the hills.

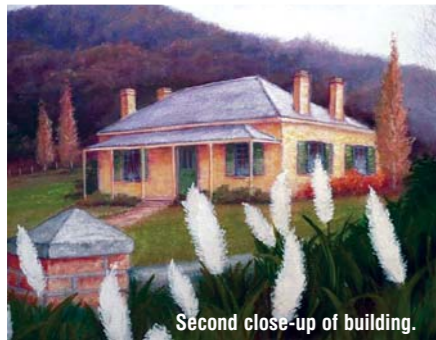
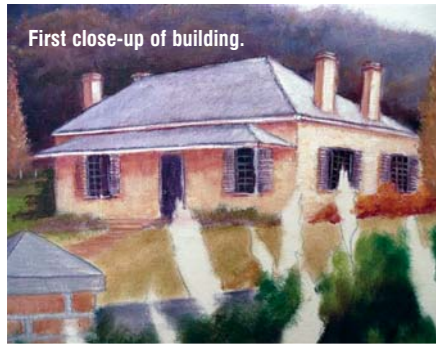


The fine twiggy tree.

into a fine point. Paint the branches and twigs from the base up over the wet paint – remembering to ease off the pressure towards the end of each stroke.

THE BUILDING

As I mentioned before, there are countless techniques you could deploy in this painting. Because I'm pressed for time, I'm going to use a method I call 'Outline and Colour In'. First up, the building needs to be 'blocked in' roughly, in a darker version of our final colour. I've already done that. Then you take your script liner (or dagger) brush and outline each area of colour in a slightly darker version of the 'blocked in' colour (roof Ultramarine Blue, Quinacridone Crimson and White; walls and chimneys Yellow Ochre, Quinacridone Crimson and White).



WALLS

While that outline is still wet, colour in the highlight side of the chimneys with a 5mm bristle bright with mostly White and a tiny amount of Yellow Ochre. Make sure your brush strokes are applied in the direction of the construction (vertical). The pure paint (no mediums) is applied with short downward strokes allowing some of the underlying 'blocked in' colour to peep through. When the light sides are completed, use the same brush for the darker sides – adding in a little more Yellow Ochre and a tiny pinprick of Quinacridone Crimson. Apply the paint in short downward strokes to give the vague impression of stone blocks.

Next, I deepened the colour for the shadows under the eaves, the porch and even just below the shutters. The windows were darkened with Ultramarine Blue and Quinacridone Crimson. While wet, I used the script liner with Ultramarine Blue and White to indicate the panes of glass in the windows. You will notice that at this stage I have not attempted to paint the fascia boards, the posts and the shutters (the painting needs to be dried before those features are added).

THE ROOF

Use a clean 5mm bristle bright for the light side, with almost pure White – remembering to allow a little of the 'blocking in' colour to come through. With this same brush, add more Ultramarine Blue, a little Quinacridone Crimson and just a touch of Dioxazine Purple for the darker side. In the process of 'colouring in' your brush will blur or even absorb the outline in places. That's just how it should be. Slightly overlapping or blurring the lines prevents the painting looking like an illustration. Make sure your brush strokes are applied on the same angle as the slope of the roof.

THE GARDEN ON THE RIGHT

The large poplar was painted in the same way as the other two, but I decided to move it forward in front of the building. Try to vary the outline of these trees because in Nature they are not perfectly conical in shape. The orange bushes were dabbed in with mostly a mixture of Quinacridone Crimson, Genesis Yellow and only a little White. For the darks I added a little more Quinacridone Crimson and Sap Green. Because I was about to dry the painting, I decided to paint in the mortar in the foreground brick pillar. The grey mortar colour needed to be dried before I painted in the orange bricks.

Handy hint: This is probably the perfect time for me to digress ... to try to tackle an important question that almost always pops up with my students.

"What is the correct order for applying my paint?"

The answer should be straightforward, but it is more complex than that because it depends on a number of factors. If a painting is to be 'blocked in', naturally that has to be done first and then allowed to dry. The rule of thumb is to work from the background to the foreground. That works fine for Genesis, because it can be dried on demand. If we

are working in oils, sometimes we skip ahead so that sections like the mortar in the bricks can have a chance to dry before we reach that spot.

The Impressionists, however, viewed a painting 'as a whole'. So when they had the right colour on their brush they would daub it in wherever they wanted it to be – whether background or foreground.

This is very difficult for beginners who have not yet had a chance to train their brains to see as an artist and therefore project clear images of their revised concept onto the screen of their imagination.

For this painting, I'll stay with the 'colour in with daubs' method. However, when the painting nears completion, I will probably add more colour here and there to 'tie it together' ... something the Impressionists did extremely well.

I dried the painting before proceeding with the shutters, fascia and posts for two reasons: I did not want that new colour to mix with the colour on the walls; and to make straight lines with the script liner, I needed to be able to rest my hand on the painting. The shutters were dabbed in using the flat edge of a clean 5mm bristle bright with Sap Green; with White added for the highlights (make sure the angle of the brushstrokes follows the perspective lines of the painting). I also made an effort to allow the darker lines from the 'blocking in' of the shutters to appear in places. While I had that brush in my hand, I popped in the front door with some glass panels to match the windows. I also scumbled on a little Ultramarine Blue and White onto the lower part of the windows where the light caught the glass.

With a few strokes of the trusty script liner, we have a couple of worn-down steps and part of the patio leading to the front door. The same brick colour was useful for the path. Remember, it is important that this path is painted with horizontal strokes so it appears to lie down flat on the ground.

Now it's back to the fan brush to lay the turf in the front yard. At this stage, I have decided to deliberately resist the temptation to make this grass too green – because I want some contrast with the foreground green foliage that is coming up next on the agenda.

Let's pause for a moment. I want you to be privy to the thought processes that are going through my brain right now. I could make the foreground green a more vibrant colour by using perhaps Phthalo Green and Genesis Yellow. We have not used any Phthalo Green in the painting so far, so its introduction now would create two problems: The vibrancy of this colour would make the foreground the focal point; and I must then add Phthalo into the greens I have already completed so the two parts of the painting would 'tie in' together.

I decided to stay committed to Sap Green as the initial plan was to have the building as the main feature. This green can be darkened with Ultramarine Blue and Quinacridone Crimson or lightened with Yellow Ochre and Genesis Yellow. The foliage in the original photograph is quite 'fussy', so I deliberately chose to use a larger brush and bold strokes. My brushes of choice are two three-eighth inch dagger brushes – one for the light colours (Sap Green, Genesis Yellow and Yellow Ochre) and the other for the darks (Sap Green, Ultramarine Blue and Quinacridone Crimson). Of course the different variations in colour result from more or less of these colours. The paint is applied with Sansodor or Thinning Medium.

I dried this area as soon as it was completed so I could white out the flowers.

Do you remember how I mentioned last month that these flowers in the original painting lacked intensity because the blue/purple colour was painted over the green foliage? That's why I have painted around the spaces for the flowers. Now that this paint is dry, I am going to paint these

flowers with pure White and dry the painting again.

Remember, if you are doing this in oils, you will need to wait for the foliage to dry; then paint the flowers with white oil-based satin enamel or underpainting white in the tube to 'white out' the spaces for the flowers. Wait for that paint to dry before proceeding with the flowers.

In this illustration you can see the 'white-outed' flowers with my dagger brush applying the Quinacridone Magenta and a little White to the outer edges. These blooms seem to have this pink colour as a type of halo around the flower that, I think, looks quite attractive. After drying this paint I used Ultramarine Blue and a little Sansodor on another dagger brush to daub in the body of the flower. A cotton bud was the perfect tool to retrieve some of the highlights. While this paint was wet, I applied pure Quinacridone Magenta into the blue for the darker areas. Before I dried the flowers, I used the tip of a clean palette knife to scrape some tiny white highlights.

Up to this point, the white blobs for the flowers were a distraction in trying to view this painting as a 'whole'. Now they've been 'coloured in', it's time to make a cuppa, prop the painting up, then sit back and take a long hard look. Here are my thoughts:

My first impression is that I have certainly conquered the lack of 'colour intensity' in the foreground flowers – a big problem with the original painting. In fact the flowers have gone from fading wallflowers to 'stars of the show'! Not to worry, it's easier to send things back rather than bring them forward. To achieve this, I will add a little Sap Green into the darker parts of the blooms – as in the original photograph.

I have decided to lighten and highlight the grass in the front lawn.

The left side of the brick pillar in the bottom right foreground needs to be darker as in the original sketch.

I will daub some pure Genesis Yellow and White onto the highlight



wall of the building; and then some of this colour with just a touch of Yellow Ochre onto the porch wall. This adjustment is needed because this building did not have enough of the yellow intensity that was part of the original plan. More yellow was needed to act as the complimentary colour to the flowers.

I have to say that heat-dried oils make it so much easier to adjust your paintings. It could be tricky lightening the front lawn. Because the paint is dry, I can repaint an area and then just use a cotton bud to clean up where the paint has overlapped. Remember your guilty feeling when you coloured over the lines when you were a kid!

My first task was to lighten the front lawn with a mixture of Genesis Yellow, Yellow Ochre, Sap Green and White. Do you remember that I mentioned that when you introduce a new colour in the foreground you must use it somewhere in the rest of the painting to tie the whole thing together? I selected the Quinacridone Magenta to darken up the left side of the pillar. I also dry brushed it into the hills and then mixed it with Sap Green to darken up the foreground. The blooms were toned down with a little Sap Green. The tall weed that I included in the sketch has been



deemed unnecessary and tossed out completely.

This painting is not a great work of art but I think I have succeeded in achieving most of the goals I set for myself back in the planning phase. The building is the focal point of interest. The flowers have their own intensity and have regained their rightful position as a feature in this painting. I am going to give you one last handy hint.

Handy hint: To ascertain if your focal point is working in your



painting, turn your painting around to the wall and ask someone to come in who has not seen the painting before. Have the person stand about four metres away from the painting. Turn the painting around for three seconds and then back to the wall. Repeat the above for another three seconds glimpse. Ask the person what they particularly remembered about your painting. If that person does not identify your focal point, then you have missed the objective.

Thank you for joining me for this extended consultation of Art Clinic. Please send me photographs of your discarded paintings to yooralabigpond.com or info@artist-tutor.com ... remember, you will remain anonymous.

I hope Artist B who kindly sent her painting to the Art Doctor will be pleased with the reconstruction. For all those artists who may have encountered similar problems to those we have dealt with here, I trust you have gained some insights that will assist you in your future projects.

The websites of Dalerie Patterson ... your personal on-line art trainer ... can be found at www.artist-tutor.com and www.artstudio91.com ■