

Out of Plein Air: Acrylic Landscape From Field to Studio – DVD

Charles Harrington, AWS
Produced by Creative Catalyst Productions Inc.
www.ccpvideos.com
Review by Adele Greenfield



This is truly the best of both worlds. Here the versatile acrylic paints are used for their transparent qualities so the painting looks like a fresh, vibrant watercolor. However, you'll also see some things that can only be done with acrylics such as incorporating white gesso and applying a wash over a wash without worrying about the paint underneath. Combining transparent, translucent, and opaque with acrylics usually looks better than if you do it with watercolor alone.

You're taken to an old barn and a field with horses. This is not a random choice. The barn will be torn down and this idyllic scene will be no more once new construction starts. Charles preserves not only the view, but also its quiet quality. Starting by lightly sketching on paper, he quickly finishes a small painting and uses this to create a larger one back in his studio.

To avoid erasure marks, Charles blocks out the edges and lines on tracing paper and then lays a second sheet over the first to make corrections and fill in more. Then he uses a piece of graphite transfer paper with a colored pencil so he knows what he's traced. Later when he draws into the painting, he uses a pastel pencil for direction. Once the water hits it, the lines will disappear. That's why you don't want to use pastel for the initial drawing.

With an old brush, he masks off the whites with Miskit. Masking will not lift acrylics and you just have to remember not to use any heat on the masking medium.

He shows you how to treat the brush before applying the mask, what will break down tension when using water on gesso surfaces, and what makes a good palette (acrylic will not stick to it). He explains why he uses gesso instead of white paint and how he keeps the acrylics fresh and usable by placing a wet paper towel under the paints.

You'll see how he takes care of his brushes. Acrylics are hard on them. And Charles tells you about the brands that tend to give him the most transparency. Matte medium adds body to his paints and he uses a lot of burnt sienna and ultramarine blue in his work. He explains that one of the main reasons we get mud is over-mixing on the palette. The video shows a picture-in-picture so you see the painting and the palette, watching how he puts two colors on his brush. Then you see how the colors blend on the paper.

Hard edges attract the eye and to many would not be in keeping with his subject matter so he uses a paper towel and his spray bottle to soften things.

Depending on what he wants and where, he controls temperature by cooling down or warming up areas with glazes. Burnt sienna is in the sky for warmth and blue is in the foreground to bring down the temperature. As he paints, he not only describes what he is

doing but adds little pearls such as a dark foreground will make the middle ground glow and values are relative to what is adjacent to them.

You've heard the expression about not being able to draw a straight line. He shows you how to paint a straight line with any size brush with complete control. All you need is the long end of a T-square. Watch him demonstrate this as he not only paints the line but also avoids a systematic look creating texture as he does this. In a landscape, you don't want things to look too even.

Popping out highlights and bringing out sunlit patches, you'll see how just a touch of light can relieve a dark area and add variety. And a little dark spot beside or under it can give the shape a slight 3-dimensional look and make it come alive.

As he progresses with larger and smaller masses, you see how he "weathers" the wood, paints the hay bale and tree trunks, and treats foliage with the edge of the brush. No hard outlines. Lacey edges make the leaves believable.

And, when he's done, you'll see the visual path —gestures and shapes that direct your eye through this painting that captures the scene and will live on through Charles' work.

Adele Greenfield, an artist as well as workshop leader who spent years on the international lecture circuit, is author of over 100 articles published in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Woman's Day*, and *The Writer*. Also author of a downloadable handbook, *Unleash Your Creative Genius*, and several recorded programs, her current work as a consultant/coach supports people in two areas:

- meditations for artists: coping with stress and ways to relax, renew, and re-energize the creative spirit
- image and communication: writing a bio or promotional piece and/or speaking before an audience (whether it's a demo for artists or a presentation to buyers)

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