

Johannes Vloothuis Lesson

Sunday, April 6, 2003

Painting on 1/8 sheet paper: Rocky Mountain High

There was a small sky area in this painting and Joe put in ultramarine blue without clouds. The smaller the sky, the fewer the clouds it will have.



No soft edges on cliffs or rocks, even if they're far away. They are to convey strength and character. Joe used a flat brush to get flat and sharp edges and laid in burnt sienna, raw sienna and cobalt blue for the colors. He created a subtle variation in value as he worked and let the colors merge together naturally.

Retain the sharp edges when you carve out the shadow shapes in the cliffs with darker values. Using pure ultramarine blue on top of the brown, Joe did these shadows by glazing over the rocks, switching to cobalt blue to do the blue shadows in the snow. He made sure he was dragging the brush and varying the movement of the brush so the width of the shadow parts were varied. This way he avoided straight lines. He created pointers moving down and toward the center of interest in the painting. Joe reminded us that, in the distance, the cracks and indentations won't be evident anymore so just put in the ones closer to the viewer and suggest the others.



Joe added more burnt sienna to the area just behind the treeline in the distance, then changed to a round brush to create the areas of snow between the rocks. The round brush helped him make the snow shapes rounded, not sharp-edged. He then did some drybrushing moving down and in, toward the center of the painting. Always have your rhythms moving inward to the painting, not away from it.



While he was working on the rocky areas at the upper left and moving down towards the stream, putting in the rock shapes and the evergreen trees between the cliffs he made sure he left little specks of white paper and have no hard edges on the trees and no soft edges on the rocks.

Darker trees placed in front of the blurred background trees, using prussian blue and burnt sienna. Joe put the highlights in the trees while the dark color was still wet. using yellow and ochres directly out of the tube that once they intermix with the Prussian blue will acquire a green color. This technique works as long as the dark paint is still wet. He did the evergreens in the far distant, making a few with hard edges to contrast with the soft edges on the rounder trees. The tree trunks were painted in with a chisel-edged flat brush, leaving some open spaces. The tree trunks were placed in dark areas, not over the lighter areas. He varied the slant of the trees. He scraped out the areas of the trees for whites, then scraped over the rocks to texture them.



He used prussian blue and burnt sienna, sucked out the excess water from his brush, and provoking soft edges to indicate the background evergreens. By working on the trees this way, Joe created several planes of trees in the painting.

Using a flat brush, he did the rocks in front of the cliff area with ultramarine blue and burnt sienna. He was always moving downwards with one swooping motion with the brush so it would look fresh. He started developing this area more, creating grass with various colors in between the rocks. He noted that the grass is greener where the water is because it gets nutrients from the water.

Joe continued working on the rocks tumbling down towards the stream bed, carving in the shadow shapes and creating the various planes in the rocks. He told us that he was using warmer colors as he moved closer to the stream and cooler colors farther away. It was okay to get backruns in the rocks because it just added to the textures and shapes.



After he was satisfied with the shapes of the rocks, he laid the paper flat and added the dark shadows of the snow. Here, in the snow areas, he didn't want any backruns.



He then added bits of grassy areas in between the rocks on the hillside.

When working on the rocks tumbling down the hillside, Joe allowed some of the orange and yellow ochre colors to show through. He also used a bit of pink color to "change the flavor." When creating your rocks, think of planes and values. Carve out your planes with darker values. When doing this, the idea is to get it done quickly with as few brush strokes as possible. You don't need so much detail in the upper left corner because it is the farthest from you and you should just suggest crevices and cracks.



The stream was begun with prussian blue and burnt sienna. Make your colors cooler in the background and warmer in the foreground, adding a touch of windsor yellow to get the greener color in the foreground of the stream. After the stream colors dried, he went back in and created his reflections of the rocks, trees, and snowbank. Since this area was dry, Joe rewet with his flat brush, being careful not to disturb the colors underneath, then put in swaths of color in a vertical motion coming down from the rocks. The snowbank reflections were done by lifting off color in “threads” to lighten the area and make it look like running water. He did the reflections with the paper flat on the board to eliminate backruns. As a final step, he glazed the entire stream with blue.

The finishing touches were done by drybrushing some of the closer rocky areas, darkening the shadow areas of the rocks and carving out more dark planes and putting in the cracks in the rocks. He also made the snowbank at the left side more rounded over the rock shapes.



Time to add the sparkles in the water with an exacto knife, scraping down from the edge of the stream. And this painting was done!

