

Leisure Painter

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METHODS
Masking Fluid

REMBRANDT **Soft Pastels**

PROJECT WITH **David Bellamy**

REVIEW
**Artisan
Brushes**

ACRYLIC
Primers & Mediums



Ray Elwood's Oils

Shout with joy
when you get it
right, says the
author

My understanding of colour theory is one thing; the natural world is another. It is true to say that warm colours — red and yellows — come forward and cool colours — blues and greys — recede. True, that is, until you see the oil painting by Joseph Turner, *The Fighting Temeraire*. His fiery red and yellow sunset is 100 miles away while the cool, dark greys of the towing tug are at my feet. During a thunderstorm, the sky and sea can merge into a colour of purple-black, yet the water in the middle distance is translucent green. Observation is more helpful to the artist than theory.

During a trip to London in 1995 I went to an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, *Landscapes of France, Impressionism and its Rivals*. The show was set out in a very interesting way. A selection of monumental canvases, which would have been acceptable to the Paris Salon in the mid-19th century, was shown alongside work by the Impressionists. Seen side by side, the paintings had a powerful impact. I was unprepared for the actual oil paint. Every art book containing reproductions should carry a warning: "You are advised to go and see these paintings for yourself." Thick oil paint will catch light and cast a shadow, an effect lost in



Figure 1 Knocknarea, Co. Sligo.
Oil 12"×16"

reproduction. One of the Impressionist paintings, a small boat with yellow sails, by Renoir, danced off the wall, with light and life in the paint.

Most of my work is painted outdoors, but many of the great landscape paintings were completed indoors. Working directly from nature has its problems. With one eye on the weather and the other on the time, we don't always design well. In my experience, the ever-changing light and weather can create lovely atmosphere, but balance and harmony can suffer. A studio painting can have a much stronger design, especially when figures or animals are introduced.

When setting out a new canvas at the blocking-in stage, I get great fun out of using thin turpsy paint without white, searching for form and contrast. There are times when I wish that I did not have to finish, for fear of working the painting to death.

Folding easel

If I am happy with the blocking-in stage, I let the painting dry (thin turpsy paint without white will dry quickly) while I set out my full range of colours, including white. I use artists' quality paints: sap green, Winsor blue, cerulean blue, light red, cadmium red, raw sienna, Winsor yellow, Naples yellow, raw umber and

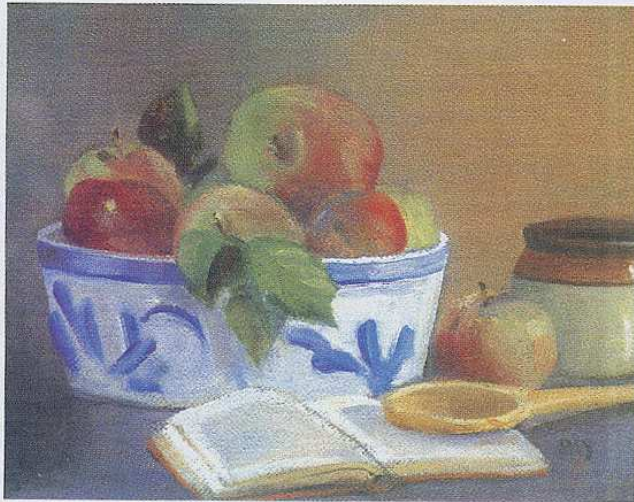
titanium white. With most of the compositional problems behind me, it is nice to look at all that fresh, juicy paint. I mix my tones in advance, making sure I have plenty for sky or background. This is important. Once the painting is well under way and I need to sculpture around trees, or roofs, the harmony is retained by using the same colours. If I haven't mixed enough my progress is hindered.

When painting, I stand at a folding box easel which suits my approach, especially outdoors. If I have to stop the work due to the weather, I can fold the easel without disturbing the palette or the painting, enabling me to work indoors, confident that my colours are unchanged. I prefer linen canvas on stretchers as supports and generally use these for studio work. If I am away painting for several days I use boards. I have a box to hold six in different stages of drying.

When Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) was asked how he managed to paint such a fine beard of an old man he answered: "With the biggest brushes". It was true then and is true today. I cannot convince some students of this. They struggle through each class with small brushes and, worse still, put out tiny amounts of paint as if there were no more to be had. I put out my full range of colours in abundance.

When painting, look at the effect, mix it, put it down and shout with joy when you get it right. Reading all about theory

Figure 2 Windfalls. Oil 12"×14"



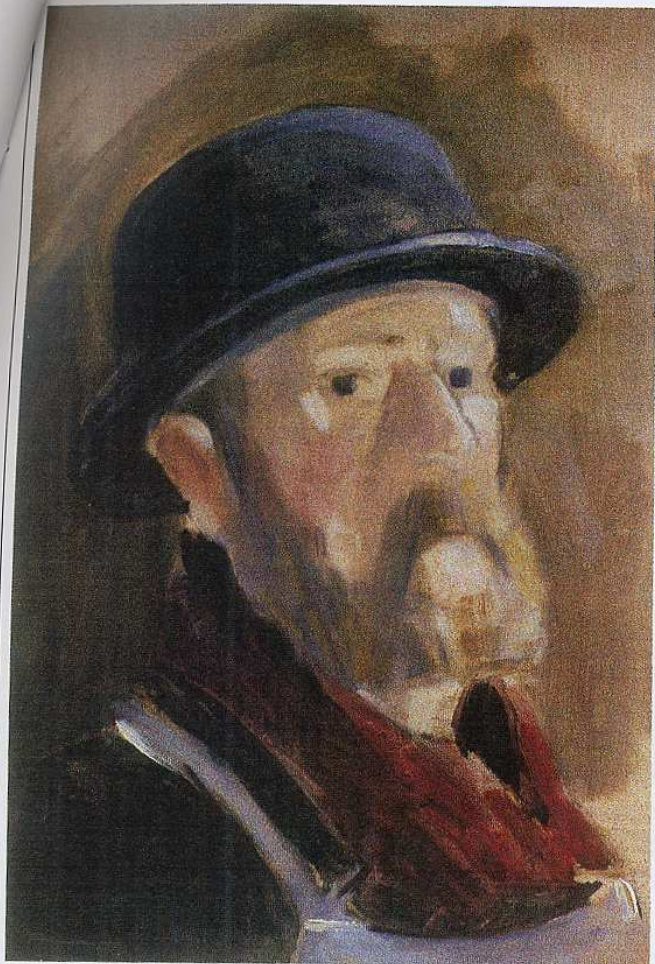


Figure 3 (Left) Lay-in for 'The Tradesman'

Figure 3a (Left bottom) The Tradesman. Oil 14"x18"

Figure 4 (Above top) The Letter. Oil 9"x12"

Figure 5 (Above) Scrabo Tower, Newtownards, Co. Down. Oil 14"x18"



All oils
by Ray
Elwood

is more interesting when you have a nice, juicy oil painting to frame up.

The illustrations

Knocknarea, Co. Sligo Nature does not always present us with a ready-made composition. When I chose this subject I was interested in the light. However, the strong horizontal lines at the base of the hill and in the water presented a serious problem. Far out of the picture, to the right, was a lighthouse. I decided to move it. This gave me a strong vertical and it looked like it should be there. Then one of those rare strokes of luck — the yachts came out from Rosses Point opposite, and my problem was solved. The foreground needed interest, so, referring to my sketchbook, I placed the cattle with confidence. The rising