

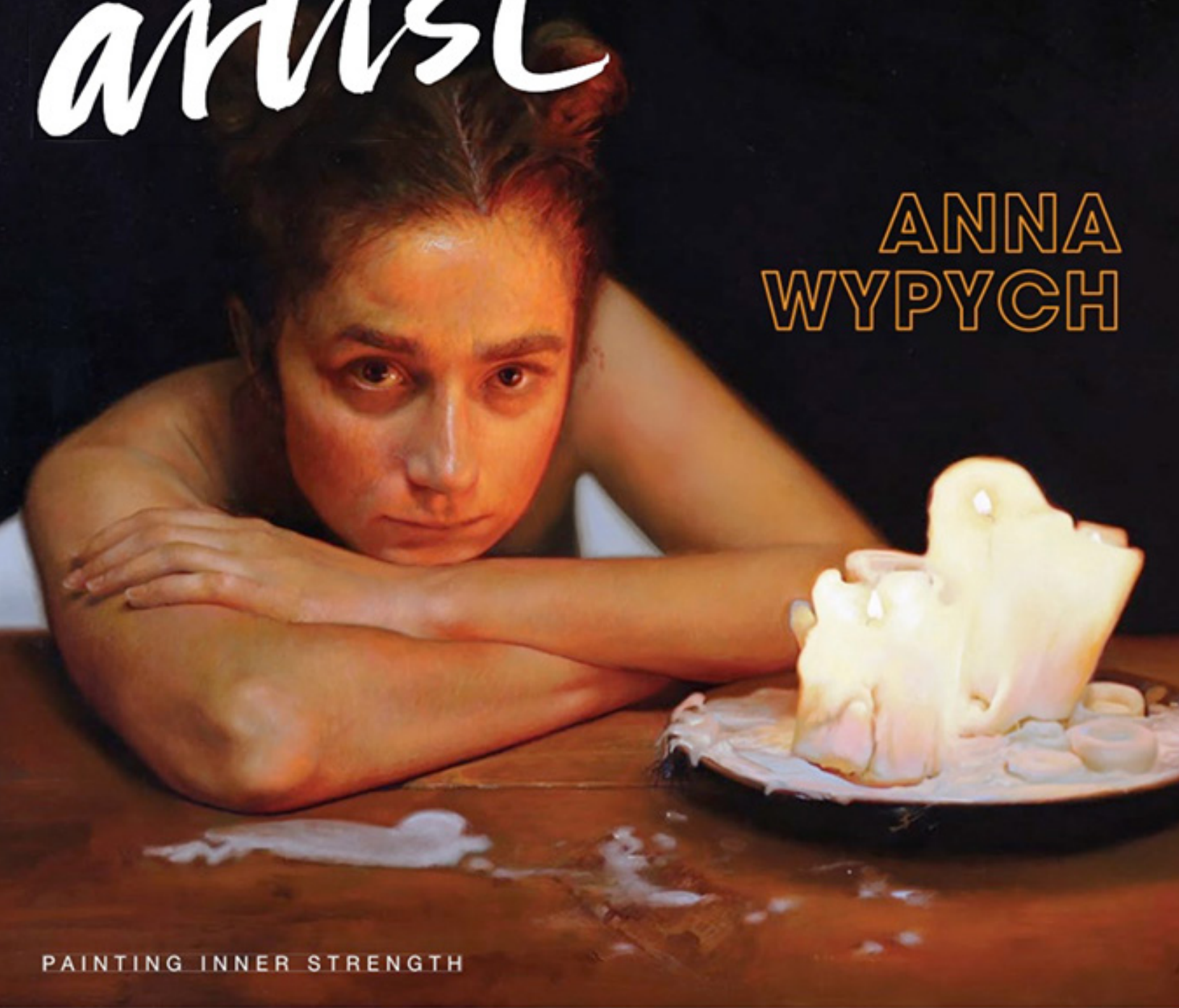
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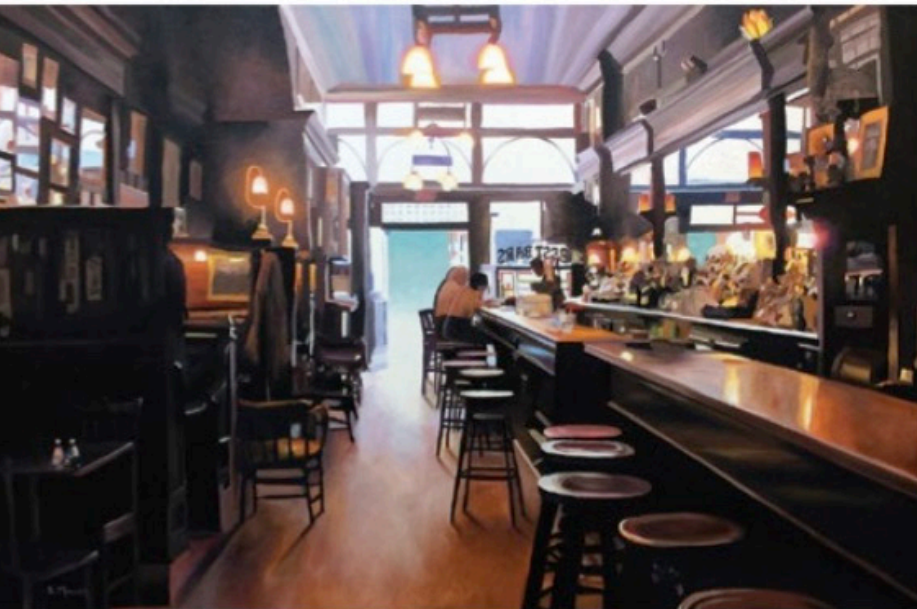




Sue Miller

Making Goals

Each composition Sue Miller paints has specific technical goals to enhance the overall vision



Old Town Bar, oil on canvas, 24 x 36" (61 x 91 cm)

This is a painting of a classic New York prohibition-era bar that has kept its original personality from the 1800s. Strong perspective and contrasting values help create a dynamic image.



Evenings Golden Light, oil on canvas, 24 x 24" (61 x 61 cm)

My intention was to try to capture the intense light and colours that emerge from the setting sun.

I enjoy painting a variety of subject matter to stay sharp and constantly learn new methods, colour mixtures and explore different compositions. Interior scenes are a good challenge as the lighting is such a crucial element when painting an image that is convincing to the viewer. The light also adds an additional element of interest and can evoke emotion in subtle ways. In this particular piece, *The Great Debate*, I tried to capture the play of strong luminous sunlight streaming through a window illuminating the dark room, washing away some colours while contributing to the vibrancy of others.

This scene has a wide range of light intensities from sun drenched to very dimly lit areas. The sunlight completely changes the colours and even at times, the shapes of objects as well.

When viewing a painting, our focus is typically pulled to the lightest areas, making those the likely focal points of the work. To help with this, I often employ the chiaroscuro technique to create the illusion of three-dimensional depth and a sense of drama. This technique makes use of bold contrasts between light and dark, usually strong differences influencing the entire composition. The balance

and arrangement of light and shade in a painting can lead to dramatic illumination, added tension and visual direction. It's an effective approach in creating realistic subject matter and a strategy to focus the viewer's attention. In this painting, the luminous beams of light highlight the subjects and add to the mood of the work.

Another goal for this piece was to show a relationship between the subjects in the painting. While I did not know these gentlemen, to me they seemed to have a strong connection to each other, perhaps being old friends who set aside time to get together and catch



Life on Display, oil on canvas, 30 x 20" (76 x 51 cm)

Ideas come from many sources and in this case, from a dream. Portraying the delicate strength of glass with the vivid colours it reflects realistically can be a challenging task.



up, discuss topics that are important to them and retell old stories of days past. I enjoyed bringing out their personalities by adding enough detail to their facial expressions and postures to show a bit of what they might be thinking—one is animated, one interested, one perhaps might seem a bit bored. Has he heard this story before? The painting hanging above them on the wall was another fun element in this piece as it seems as though the man in that painting might almost be eavesdropping...perhaps trying to pick up a stock market tip.

Typically, I ensure colour harmony throughout each painting by using a mother colour to unify the work and make sure all colours relate to one another. By mixing some of the mother colour into every new colour created, a rapport is developed for a visually cohesive painting. The hue used depends on the atmosphere and character of the scene. Just about any colour can be used as long as it complements the piece...using a colour from an important element in the composition is often quite effective. It's important to



Spirits on High, oil on canvas, 54 x 30" (137 x 76 cm)

Vivid colour and areas of high contrast compliment the atmosphere and charisma of a dimly lit lounge.

use restraint with this technique though as contrasts in temperature and value must be retained and, if overdone, the result could look dull and muddled. ⁶⁸

DESIGN AND COMPOSITION TACTICS

- » I use the rule of thirds when laying out my composition. This guideline helps create stronger images with greater visual interest making the finished painting more pleasing to the viewer.
- » I aim to paint in a style that when viewed from a distance, looks quite realistic, but when explored at close range, the abstract brushstrokes are quite obvious.

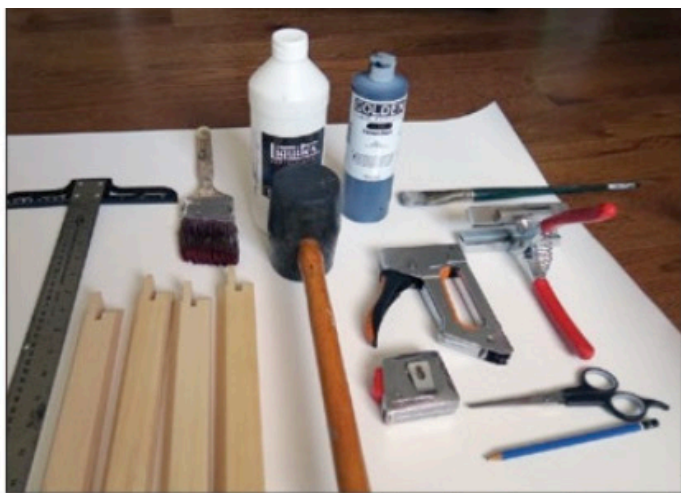
My Art in the Making The Great Debate



STAGE 1 SELECTING PHOTO REFERENCES

I typically work from reference photos viewed on my iPad. First, I adjust the colour and contrast of my photos in Photoshop to get them to my liking. For this painting, I plan on emphasizing the rich colours and the highlights from the sun streaming in the windows and develop more of a connection between the subjects.





STAGE 2 CANVAS PREPARATION

After deciding on the painting size (24 by 24 inches, in this case), I stretch the canvas onto gallery stretcher bars. The canvas then gets three of coats of gesso and a light sand. I paint the edges with black fluid acrylic.

STAGE 3 ROUGH SKETCH

I quickly sketch out some of the important features of the composition and check their relationship to each other. The rough sketch allows me time to thoroughly study the composition before putting brush to canvas so I can hopefully see what will work and what won't in the composition. I like this particular composition as the light coming in the window will give the painting an interesting dynamic and create good contrast between lights and darks.



WHAT THE ARTIST USED

Canvas preparation

- » Canvas stretched onto gallery stretcher bars, 24 x 24 inches
- » Gesso
- » HB pencil

Medium

- » Linseed oil

Water Mixable Oil Paints

- » Titanium white
- » Burnt umber
- » Burnt Sienna
- » French ultramarine
- » Permanent alizarin crimson
- » Cadmium red
- » Cadmium yellow

Brushes & Tools

- » Synthetic and bristle brushes ranging from No. 16 to No. 0 flat
- » Small palette knife

Finishing

- » Water mixable satin varnish



STAGE 4

FIRST BLOCK IN

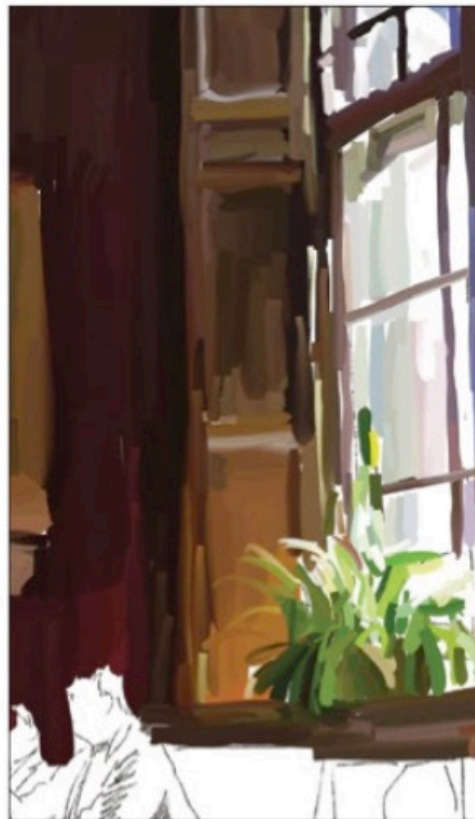
Once I'm happy with how things sit within the framework of the canvas, I begin blocking in with a broad brush.

I typically work from the top left corner to the bottom right, zone to zone, so I can keep my hand out of the wet paint. Using a large flat brush, I roughly block in the basic shapes and develop the values, trying to stay loose and not worry about details just yet.

STAGE 5

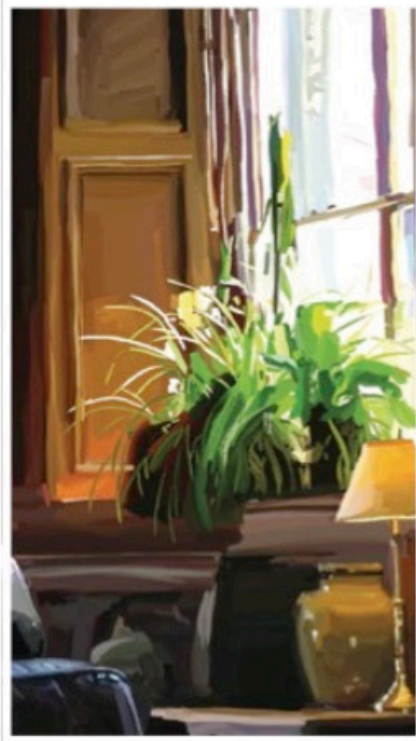
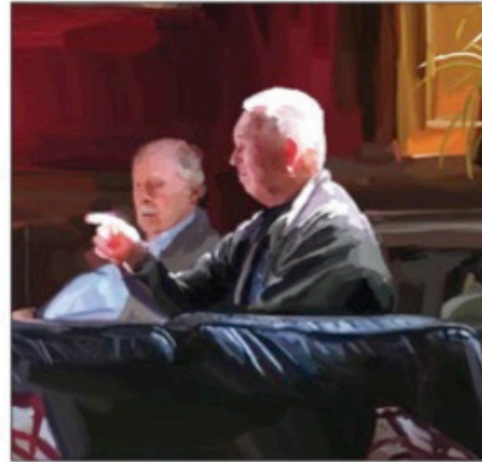
SECOND BLOCK IN

As I continue to work across the canvas, I strive to mix harmonious colours that give a sense of drama in their values. I try to stay away from the top of the tonal range at this point, saving the brightest whites and darkest tones for the end. I focus on getting the main forms down quickly and accurately, constantly comparing one shape to another and making refinements as I go.



STAGE 6 FINISHED BLOCK-IN

Once the block in is complete, I study the overall composition and areas of lights and darks to see if I'm on the right track. Whenever possible, I prefer to get the block-in done in one sitting.



STAGE 7 SECOND PASS

From here, I'm ready to layer over the block-in with a smaller brush. I go back in to refine shapes, add details and hits of stronger colour. I'm breaking up the flat shapes to convey more realistic characteristics, paying careful attention to the tones and colours, building up one area at a time.





STAGE 8 FINAL DETAILS

Working with even smaller brushes, I focus on texture and surface details. Afterward, I let it dry for a good week before going back in to add a glaze of linseed oil, titanium white and a hint of cadmium yellow for the sun streaming in the window.



STAGE 9
FINISHED
PAINTING
The Great Debate, oil,
 24 x 24" (61 x 61 cm)

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sue Miller creates realistically detailed oil paintings using strong design, expressive colour and vibrant luminosity that immediately resonate with the viewer. She works in oil on canvas, capturing the effect of light on form and developing the unique colour, characteristics and cultural aspects of the subject matter. Portraying everyday objects and moments in extraordinary ways with a skillful use of colour, perspective and vision is her trademark. Inspiration comes from the world around her and the ever-changing effects of light on a subject matter.





Miller earned Associate Signature Status in the Federation of Canadian Artists, was elected to the Society of Canadian Artists and the Ontario Society of Artists and is a proud member of the Rotary Club of Whitby Sunrise.

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