Acrylic Layers Workshop

Quick Reference Guide:
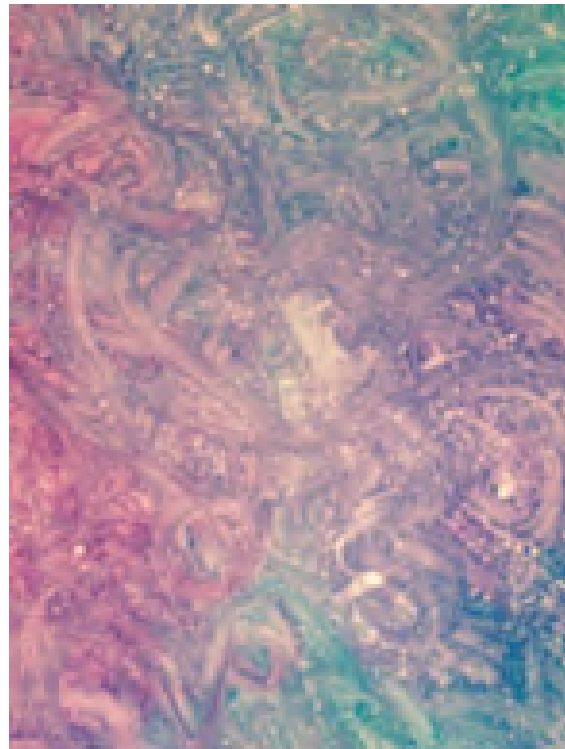
Underpaintings

Underpainting Quick Reference Guide

Underpaintings Overview

Underpaintings are the literal foundation of my "Acrylic Layers" process! We cover five underpainting options in the workshop, but these are just a start! So long as the Acrylic Gel will adhere to the surface (i.e., not an oil-based media like oil paint or oil pastel!) you can use it as an underpainting!
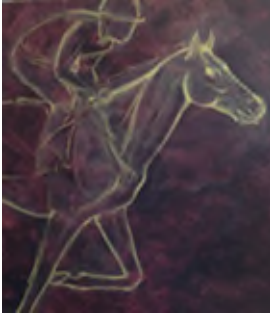
Depending on how you work, your underpaintings can range in function from a framework for later layers (e.g., a drawing you will totally obscure but guides the overall design) to a random color field to provide a complementary sparkle in the final piece, to a "failed" or "stuck" painting or drawing that needs to be resolved and serve a higher purpose!

This workshop introduces five underpainting options which are summarized below
- Tone and Drawing
- Color / Texture
- Collage
- Image Transfer
- Failed / Stuck Painting or Drawing

You can refer to these to get you started or to inspire your own personal and exciting underpainting ideas since these are just a start!

Underpainting Quick Reference Guide

Tone & Drawing Underpainting

- Tone the surface of the panel or paper the desired color.
- Remember this underpainting is the foundation and will either be fully obscured or only peak through where you choose through later layers.
- You can draw with whatever dry media you choose, example was done with water soluble color pencil. I find it easy to adjust/erase with a wet brush and it adds it's own color sparkle if I choose to keep it visible in later layers.
- Drawing provides the guidelines for later layers and allows overall composition and design to be worked out early.
- With this process you will not be limited by this initial framework!

Color / Texture Underpainting

- Create a colorful background on paper or panel.
- Dampen the surface, add paint, mix, swirl, spatter, lift to your heart's desire!
- You can sprinkle with water or alcohol while damp before it dries and use tissue to blot and lift paint from the surface
- You can go as crazy and wild as you like on the underpainting because you can hide as much or as little of this initial color and texture "play" as you desire!
- This is a great method to "get rid of the white" and jumpstart your painting!

Collage Underpainting

- Create a basic design collaging commercial and/or handmade papers and other ephemera to create a basic design and framework.
- This provides strong structure to refine, embellish, and accent in later layers.
- Like any underpainting, you can hide as much or as little of this initial design as you go in subsequent layers.

Image Transfer Underpainting

- Transferring an image (typically from an inkjet printer print out) can provide a solid basis to start from. Remember to work quickly!
- Coat paper or panel surface lightly with thin layer of gel.
- Coat the face of the inkjet printout image lightly and evenly with thin layer of gel (NOT THE BACK! We want to transfer the ink into the gel, not glue it like in collage!)
- Place the gelled image onto the gelled surface and use a scraper or credit card to push out air bubbles and excess gel from center to the edges.
- Work quickly since if an area dries it won't transfer!
- Test the back, when barely damp and cool to touch, lift a corner and see if image remains on the surface, gently pull off remaining paper. Don't worry if image not perfect, remember it is a starting point!
- Allow to dry completely. If cloudy, there is still paper pulp to be removed, wet your finger and GENTLY rub the excess pulp away...

Failed/Stuck Painting or Drawing Underpainting

- Didn't work out as intended? NO idea how to finish? Don't throw it out! Make it an underpainting!
- If you like the basic design but it was just getting muddy or "meh" repurpose as underpainting!
- You can correct mis-drawn areas on later layers as you go...
- Enliven muddied areas in the original with fresh color / texture...
- Once "gelled" it is easy to correct and change; to hide and expose... You are freed to take it in a fresh direction... let go of the old expectations and create something new!
- If you like the colors but hate the design, turn it on its side or upside down, gel it, and get started afresh!

What Else Can You Think Of?

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