

Monochrome portrait on tinted background – 11 October 2023

Introduction

We see faces everywhere, so it is hardly surprising that we want to capture them. We expect a portrait to look like the person, 'sort of' isn't usually acceptable, so many artists shy away from attempting them.

The aim of this series of webinars is to be contemporary and joyful. These are not portraits to hang in museums but will help the artist capture the faces and character of family and friends or people they encounter every day. Each webinar stands on its own, but also complement each other.

In this session we will explore the tonal map of the face. We will work in monochrome on a toned background to paint an interesting portrait. Some experience of watercolour is assumed.

Example (see over for the reference photo we shall be working from)



Learning points

- How to see tone and how tone does more work than colour
- Better understanding of the tonal map of the face
- Appreciating the power of a monochrome
- How to tone a background
- How to lift or regain highlights
- Wet in wet, wet on dry and dry brushing techniques

Liz Chaderton
FINE ARTIST

Materials

- Quarter sheet of NOT (cold pressed) paper 11x15inches/28x38cms
- Instant coffee dissolved in boiling water and cooled (or tea bag steeped in boiling water), to tone the background
- Dark brown watercolour of your choice eg Van Dyke brown, burnt Umber, Sepia
- White gouache
- Round watercolour brush size 8-10, rigger size 2, small flat brush for lifting
- Water pots, palette, eraser, pencil, kitchen towel

Method

If you want to paint along during the webinar, please print out the reference photo to A4 or have it available and have the contours drawn out lightly onto your paper. Also please tone your paper beforehand so that it is fully dry. You can do this roughly to add interesting marks and texture or as a flat wash if you prefer. We are using tea or coffee as a toning colour to add a bit of fun to the process and to engage our senses. Simply create a solution of your beverage (no milk!) and use it as you would watercolour. If you are concerned about the longevity of your piece, you could use your brown to lightly tone the paper. Aim for a light to mid tone to that you can still achieve contrast.

This is how I toned the paper for my example. Some areas were skipped and drops of water were splattered in to create random blooms. Allow to dry thoroughly.



Reference image

All reference photos for this series come from Pixabay, which is a free site where all photos are made available royalty free. You can download the image here <https://pixabay.com/photos/old-people-woman-1839049/>



About Liz

Liz Chaderton is a full time artist based in Berkshire. Her fifth book, *Painting Portraits in Watercolour*, is being published in October by The Crowood Press. You can find more of her work at www.lizchaderton.co.uk