

Acrylic Painting Techniques:  
A Series of Nature Themed Acrylic Paintings

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## **Introduction:**

Acrylic paint is an extremely versatile medium allowing for numerous creative techniques. The goal of this thesis was to explore these techniques. Research was conducted through the library and internet sources, along with direct observation of acrylic paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Then, I produced a series of seven paintings with each painting incorporating one of the previously researched techniques and styles. The theme of nature was used for each painting to create unity within the series. In order to better demonstrate the techniques and procedures, I filmed myself and the painting process for three of the art works. The literature review, videos, and gallery are presented below.

## **Literature Review:**

- Adams, K., Skanski-Such, B., & Li, Y. (2017). *Oil & acrylic workshop: Classic and contemporary techniques for painting expressive works of art*. Minneapolis: Quarto Publishing Group USA.

This book explains the techniques, tools, and methods used by three acrylic artists. Kimberly Adams focuses on finger painting and layering; Bridget Skanski-Such focuses on the use of stencils and sponges; and Yiqi Li focuses on brushes and pallet knives to emphasize texture and color. Li notes the crosshatching technique which I use for the sky in *Dandelion Field* and the spattering technique which was incorporated into *Unity of Nature*.

- Bauer, Joe. (2018). *Pouring-tutorial, techniques and tips*. Acrylic pouring.  
<https://www.joe-bauer.com/acrylic-pouring/>

Bauer was my primary source for the painting *Fluidity of Nature*. The blog details the precise materials and ratios necessary for a pour along with the various effects that can be created. In my pour, I used the flip cup method outlined by Bauer. I utilized silicone oil and a blowtorch to form cells. Tilting was used to stretch the paint across the canvas, creating fluid patterns.

- Bria, C., Rabinovitch, C., & Sickler, M. (2003). Acrylic painting. *Oxford art online*.  
doi:10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T000378

Acrylic paint is a relatively new painting medium. Sickler, Bria, and Rabinovitch walk through the history and evolution of acrylic paints, as well as the paint medium's unique properties. Acrylics are extremely versatile and can be mixed with other elements to create body and texture. They can also be thinned or thickened upon mixture with other media, which enables acrylic paint to behave like both watercolor and oil. This flexibility of acrylic paint allows for the use of various creative techniques and styles, which are explored in my thesis.

- Shropshire, T. (2016). *Landscapes: Learn to paint landscapes in acrylic step by step*. Laguna Hills, CA: Walter Foster Publishing.

Shropshire provides a step-by-step guide to painting landscapes using acrylics. He places heavy focus on color, shadow, layering, and blending. Some of these techniques that I incorporated into my paintings are stippling, impasto, and spattering. My painting, *Atop a Mountain*, was painted

entirely using the stippling technique. *Dandelion Field* was painted using only a palette knife, incorporating the impasto technique.

- Tauchid, R. (2005). *The new acrylics: Complete guide to the new generation of acrylic paints*. New York: Crown Publishing Group.

Tauchid covers various aspects of acrylics. He begins by writing about the chemical nature and production of acrylic paints, which allow for their versatility. He also discusses the paint colors of modern acrylics and their expansiveness with regards to vibrancy, glossiness, iridescence, and transparency. He notes the usage of metallic acrylic paints, which I used in *Untitled Nature*, my alcohol technique painting. Acrylics are often mixed with other mediums. Tauchid discusses liquid mediums, gel mediums, specialty mediums, retarders, and water. In my acrylic pour, *Fluidity of Nature*, I used Liquitex pouring medium to make the paints fluid and smooth.

- Tranberg, D. (2012). *Acrylic fusion: Experimenting with alternative methods for painting, collage, and mixed media*. Beverly, MA: Quarry Books.

Tranberg covers the basics of color, the various acrylic mediums, and the primary tools used for acrylic painting. He focuses primarily on specific techniques to create effects using acrylic paints. The palimpsest technique involves making shapes and wiping them partly away. This is the technique I used to paint *Water Lilies*. *Unity of Nature* was made using a technique involving the dilution of acrylic paint with water. This allows for acrylic paint to mimic the effect of watercolor. However, unlike watercolor, when the first layer of acrylic paint dries it can be painted over with another wet color without mixing/puddling of the previous layer. This is because acrylics become water resistant when dry. The hard edge technique was used to paint *Hive*. In this technique,

masking tape is used to get crisp clean edges. *Untitled Nature* highlights the rubbing alcohol technique. 91% isopropyl rubbing alcohol was used, as suggested by Tranberg, to disrupt the surface tension of the wet paint and displace the pigment. This results in interesting patterns, especially when the technique is done over several layers of paint. Other noteworthy techniques not implemented in my paintings but covered in this book include salt effect, crayon resist, sand surface, tiny soap bubbles, and spraying.

### **Videos:**

Below are videos of my painting process for three different paintings, presented in order of completion. The first two videos are time lapse while the third video is organized in a 5-step structure.

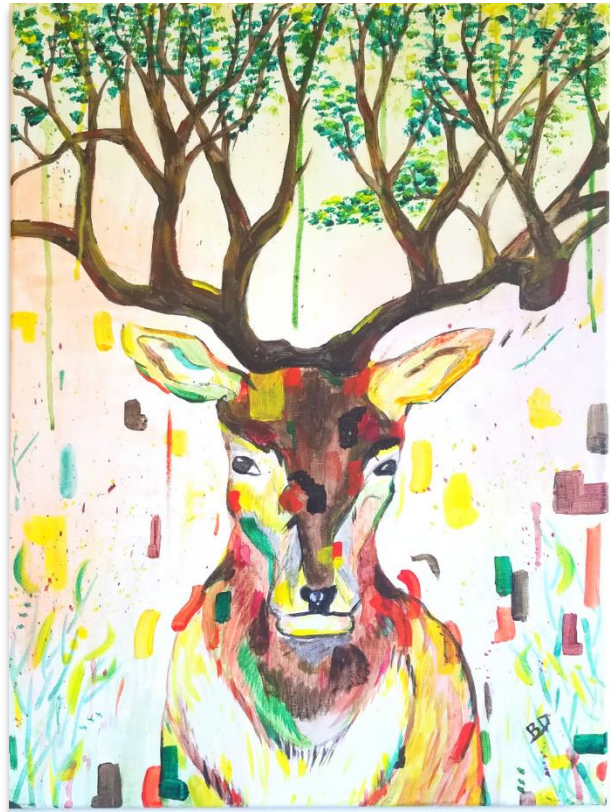
- *Dandelion Field*: [https://youtu.be/DwTaMkk\\_NFM](https://youtu.be/DwTaMkk_NFM)
- *Water Lilies*: [https://youtu.be/\\_qNDWf4ddEw](https://youtu.be/_qNDWf4ddEw)
- *Fluidity of Nature*: <https://youtu.be/FOhjQ3zYorY>

## Acrylic Gallery:

Series of Seven Nature Themed Paintings  
(Arranged by date painted)

*Unity of Nature*

Primary Technique: Acrylic as Watercolor—using diluted acrylic paint on an absorbent surface to mimic watercolor effects.



*Dandelion Field*

Primary Technique: Impasto with Palette Knife—creating thick varied ridges of different colors, values, and heights in paint using a knife.



*Water Lilies*

Primary Technique: Palimpsest—creating a richly layered surface by painting shapes and then wiping them partly away.



*Hive*

Primary Technique: Hard Edge—using sealed masking tape to get crisp clean edges.





*Fluidity of Nature*

Primary Technique: Flip Cup Pouring—pouring paint from an upside-down layered cup onto canvas to create a fluid smooth effect. Silicone oil and a blowtorch are used to form cells.



*Atop a Mountain*

Primary Technique: Stippling—dab on color in a series of dots forming a clear image from afar.



*Untitled Nature*

Primary Technique: Rubbing Alcohol—using drops of alcohol over wet paint to create interesting patterns.



*Thank You.*