

FCA Meeting – November 15, 2012
Painting demonstration by Alan Wylie, SFCA

Call to order 7:05 pm

Minutes submitted via email by Kristina Boardman

Sharlene Stushnov-Lee, President, welcomed members to the meeting. New members were introduced. Congratulations went out to the winners from the Fall Exhibition at the Morris Gallery. Sharlene mentioned the show in the spring would be at the Coast Collective from March 6-17th. Detail relating to the Morris show and the upcoming spring show is listed in the November Grapevine. The fall workshop with Richard McDiarmid was cancelled due to low enrolment.

Sharlene spoke about the December potluck on December 13th. Members are to bring their own plate, cutlery, and mug and also please bring a dish to share (with indication of special ingredients or allergens if applicable). Members are welcome to bring an unwrapped 8x10 painting if they would like to take part in a painting swap. A slide show will be created, and members are invited to submit images of their work to info@victoriafca.com

Sam Bohner introduced special guest **Alan Wylie, SFCA**.

Biography from the White Rock Gallery website (www.whiterockgallery.com):
ALAN WYLIE, AWS DF, SFCA, NWWWS, CIPA, CWA, was born in Glasgow, Scotland in 1938. He graduated from the Glasgow School of Art in 1960 with a degree in Mural Design and Mosaics. He immigrated to Nova Scotia in 1967 and began a career as a full-time artist and teacher. Alan has won many awards for his paintings, including the top prize at the Adirondacks National Exhibition of American Watercolours in the United States, and the Federation of Canadian Artists' Grand Prize in 2003. He has participated in innumerable solo and group exhibitions, and has created large murals in and on the exteriors of public buildings. He moved to British Columbia in 1973 and married his wife, artist Janice Robertson, in the early 1990s.

Alan began by indicating the painting method he was using is called Grisaille. It is an old technique (used by painters such as El Greco) that means a painting created in tonal values. Shades of grey are used ranging from white to black. Alan mentioned this would be a helpful technique for beginning painters and noted the importance of having correct tonal values in a painting. "The color can be off and the drawing can be off, but not the tonal values".

Alan begins all his paintings in the same manner, on either medium density fibreboard (MDF) or untempered hardboard. He sands the board and adds a couple of coats of gesso. He uses a roller which gives it tooth, and may give extra sanding to areas he wants to be extra smooth, such as the sky. Alan draws with his brush using black gesso. He uses an Opus Allegro brush, usually #3 or #4, and even uses these little brushes when creating a mural. He was taught in school to draw with a brush and has done it ever since.

Alan said it is important to establish the darks, lights and midtones. He waters down the black gesso to create the greys. He mentioned that sets of neutral greys are hard to find and that there was a nice set by Golden, and that Liquitex also makes one. A member mentioned that sets were available at Artworld. Alan talked about layering the greys to build up the opacity.

Alan was working on a street scene from Glasgow. He used burnt umber and Jenkins green in the greys of this particular painting and spoke about scumbling and adding tones of grey acrylic on top of the base color. Alan mentioned the importance of having the acrylic values done right before moving on to the oil paint. As he was speaking he was adding grey values to the tram to deepen the shadows and to add to the highlights. Since color will not register on top of black, Alan suggested not using a full black in the shadows. Another technique he mentioned was using a dryer brush to add texture to strokes, and suggested changing the direction and size of the stroke as well to add variety. He mentioned that you can also leave little bits of the under painting showing through to create effect. Alan later used a larger brush and a flicking motion to show how he could create snow in his painting.

Alan emphasized several times that getting the tonal values right was imperative to a successful painting. He suggested using half closed eyes to check the values. He said to “let the painting talk to you” and to read into what was happening across the painting, and to keep going over it until you get exactly what you want. Try to vary the marks made by the brush. He mentioned how you can soften an area use a watery white across it. To demonstrate this Alan softened an area in the background of the painting near the skyline which created distance and changed the mood.

Alan discussed glazing and said that he would normally spend many more hours making sure the tonal values were correct before adding oil paint, but for the purposes of this demonstration he needed to carry on to the next stage and would have to go back and do some repair work with oils (he would go back in with white oil with color in it to rework and correct tones). He mentioned that acrylic paint is not helpful for glazing because it dries too quickly, but that a thin layer of oil would be workable at least until the next day. Alan was questioned on glazing mediums, and he said he used copal oil and turpentine. He tends to like the paint just as it comes, which is fairly dry, but uses the copal oil when glazing.

Alan mentioned this technique of painting, grisaille, would be good for still life and atmospheric effects, but would not be great for portraits and figures because the greys always come through and it can look too cold underneath skin. He spoke about painting in all mediums and all types of subject matter, although not much wildlife. He said that in this painting he wanted to leave the figures impressionistic and not too worked up. Alan noted that having figures in the painting helps give it scale. He added snow to the foreground by dragging a brush and breaking up the stroke.

He was asked what he likes to do while he paints and he said he watched soccer and golf, and sometimes watches movies. “Each to his own!”

Alan began the glazing process to add color to the sky. For this painting he wanted to use five colors for glazing: olive green, sap green, Italian pink, transparent brown ochre and burnt sienna. He mentioned that pure transparencies are needed for glazes. He mixed in a bit of copal oil and used a larger brush to sweep across the sky area. He then used a rag to rub off the glaze. He added Italian pink to the tram and then wiped it off. He mentioned not to make the glaze too thick or it would obliterate the greys. He added green on the tram and then only pulled it off slightly. He suggested scraping it off with a nail in some areas for texture. Alan noted that transparent colors can also be used opaquely by using them thickly, and that it is nice to have a combination of both throughout the painting to add interest and drama. There was a conversation about covering up the snow with the glazes and he said that he would add fresh snow with white oil paint and that in turn would leave layers of snow of varying tonal values.

There was much “ooing and aaahing” at the finished product and Sam thanked Alan for a great demonstration.