

CHRISTOPHER VOLPE

Weekly Drop-In Workshop Classes



The Gleaming, 18" x 18," oil on canvas (2015 class demo)

Welcome!

Drop-In Workshop Classes:

Wednesday, 6-9 p.m. at Western Ave Studios, #521, Lowell, MA \$30/class
Every Other Thursday, 6-9 p.m. at 66 Newfields Rd., Exeter \$35/class

How to sign up: Email me to be added to the "Sign Up Genius" email list that lets me know you're coming.

This is an inexpensive, no-commitment, come-when-you-can weekly class (or workshop may be a better term) designed to teach the fundamental techniques needed to develop *your own path* as an artist. You learn from explanatory demos that show how it's done and then you do it yourself with my one-on-one help.

I learned what I know by painting, reading, looking at (and copying) great paintings, watching painters, asking questions, and experimenting. I think anyone who applies him or herself diligently can learn the rudiments of oil painting in a few months; applying those techniques for self-expression becomes the adventure (addiction?) of a lifetime! I encourage my students to do three things: 1. Be willing to play (and to fail) - let go of needing to prove yourself with each painting. 2. Look at as much art as you can, online and in person - explore the past and present, find your favorites ask yourself what influenced them, what lay behind the choices they made, and reflect upon *your* goals as a painter (what do *you* want to create and why?) and 3. Paint many paintings - which means *make many starts* - begin a painting, take it as far as you can in one sitting, then put it aside - don't look back, just start the next one. I believe in a direct, intuitive approach to art-making rooted in improvisation as well as the history of western art. My teaching philosophy is simple: I want to help my students develop a personal voice as well as the essential formal techniques required to express it, to lay the foundation for intuitive, expressive painting that is fun and feels like *yours*. Along the way, we'll end up covering formal technical details like perspective, value, color mixing, brushwork, etc. But it's expression that really counts: strong artistic vision invents its own techniques anyway.

Materials

Easel - I have several easels for student use. They're "student grade," so if you have your own portable easel you're better off bringing it. Preferably, you'll be painting standing up, though sitting is acceptable.

Palette – a surface for mixing paint on. I like good old-fashioned wood palettes, though some students use disposable palette paper, either white or gray, which they tape to our table. Folding French easels come with one.

Support - The canvas, etc. that you paint on is known as the "support." Each time you come, bring at least one support to paint on, preferably two, one small and one larger. That said, the size is mostly up to you- a doable size is 8" x 10." It's good to have a smaller one (5x7 say) for various exercises. Art supply stores sell a variety of pre-stretched canvas and inexpensive canvas board (primed canvas glued to stiff cardboard). See below for more info.

Oil Colors

- Alizarin Crimson
- Cadmium Yellow Light
- Ultramarine Blue
- Prussian (or Phthalo) Blue
- Yellow Ochre
- Burnt Umber
- Titanium White (large tube)

Additional

(The following colors are not essential, but picking them up once in a while will fill out your palette box nicely indeed)

Burnt Sienna, Cadmium Red, Cerulean Blue, Ivory Black, Cobalt Blue, Olive Green, Dioxazine /Winsor Violet, Cadmium Orange, Cobalt, Prussian (or Phthalo) Green, Permanent Green, Naples Yellow (Winsor & Newton only!), Cadmium Lemon, Transparent Iron Oxide (or Red Madder Lake), Viridian

Additional Supplies (& see below)

Canvas (in painting, called the support)

I recommend smallish cheap white cotton canvases in the beginning - 8x10 is a comfortable one to start with. It's good to pack a couple smaller canvases (5x7 or 6x8) for impromptu exercises as well. More on supports below.

Brushes

Three *stiff* bristle (hog or synth) brushes:

- one large-ish **flat**
- one **filbert** (flat rounded tip)
- one smallish **round** (comes to a point – for making lines)

Palette, knives, spirits, etc.

A sizeable palette, for mixing paint upon

Palette knife, spatula-like, for mixing (metal - not plastic!)

Refined Linseed Oil (and/or Stand Oil)

Solvent (Artist-grade turpentine, Turpenoid, odorless thinner, aka mineral spirits – I prefer Mona Lisa thinner, available locally at Michaels and A.C. Moore)

Paper Towels (blue "shop towels" from a hardware store are best)

Soft Pencil or Charcoal (rarely used)

Additional Info on Knives, Brushes and Supports

Brushes. These days I pack a 1/2" and a 2" "chip brush" (cheap, hardware store bristle brushes), a medium-sized filbert (see below), and a square-tipped palette knife (see below). For larger paintings I lay in with a 3" house painters' brush. **Just make sure not to buy soft brushes.** Ultimately, you will find through trial and error the shapes and sizes of brushes that best fit your needs. The most important thing when starting out therefore is to get **a variety of sizes and shapes.** **Stiff bristle** is best, synthetic is fine, but you don't need more than one *soft* brush (if that). You need oil painting brushes (not watercolor or acrylic) that will hold and apply chunks of paint. You want all long handled brushes (except for "riggers" (tiny small-bristle brushes for fine-tuning and detail work, but you probably won't need one of these right away, if ever).

Here's a possible combination:

2 “**Chip brushes**” (super cheap crappy brushes sold in hardware stores) sized 1/2” and 1”

1 **Housepainter’s brush**, 3”

2 **filberts**, one small and one larger (e.g. sizes 2-3 and 5-8)(for rounded strokes as well as blending - filbert is the most versatile brush)

1 **bright**, size 3 or 5 (brights are short, square brushes, good for lines and sharp straight edges)

1 **flat**, size 5-8+ (bristles long and straight at the end, good for leaving squarish visible brushstrokes)

1 **round**, or rigger, size 1, 2 or 3 (for fine lines) – least important brush

As far as I can tell, brush quality is the least important part of good painting – it’s how you use them and for what that counts, so don’t spend ridiculous amounts of money on brushes at the beginning. Buy better paint instead.



Palette Knife – you need one for mixing paint, but I also regularly use them to apply paint to the canvas as well. My go-to is and always has been a long thin blade with a squared tip (shown above). Some sources call it a “painting knife,” which seems appropriate. I suggest you get one too.

Canvas. Oil-primed Belgian linen is the cat's meow, but it's expensive. It's always best to use the highest quality materials you can afford - the better the materials, the easier it is to paint and to learn. That said....

Remember, the main thing in the beginning is *to make lots of starts and be willing to fail.*

So I recommend you get the cheapest surfaces you can find - some of my students buy pads of canvas paper and tape it to a board. The standard packages of **canvas panels** - cardboard with cotton canvas glued to it - are inexpensive enough to use without worrying too much about how many you're going through. They can actually be better for knife work than painting on stretched cotton canvas. But you can get packs of panels, canvas panels or stretched canvases at a time to save a little money. As for sizes, 8x10 is a comfortable one to start with. It’s good to pack a couple small canvases (5x7 or 6x8) for impromptu exercises as well. I’ve been liking square format supports of late, as, having neither “portrait” nor “landscape” orientation, they encourage intuitive abstract design.

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