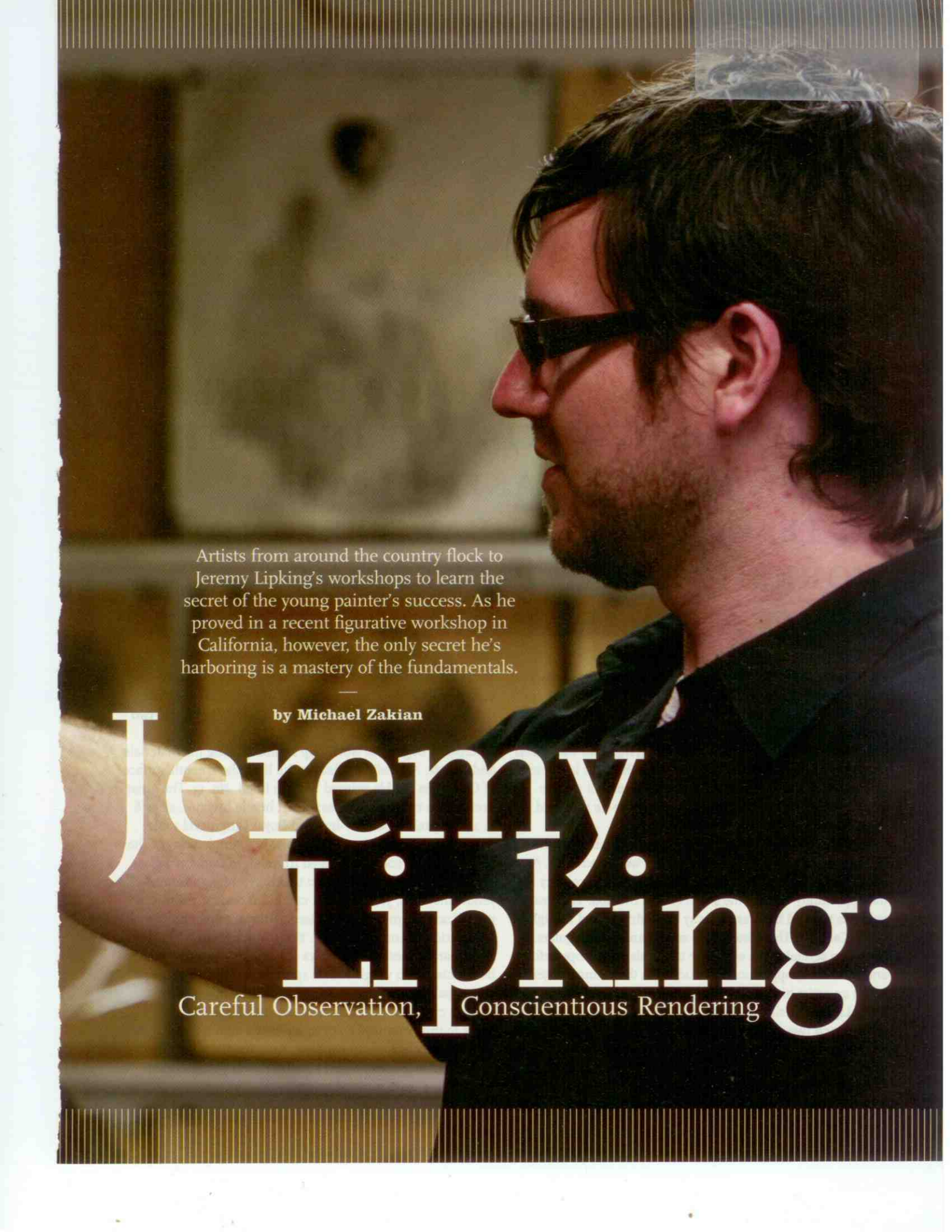


Photos: Bill Dow, Van Nuys, California (www.billdowphotography.com)



Artists from around the country flock to Jeremy Lipking's workshops to learn the secret of the young painter's success. As he proved in a recent figurative workshop in California, however, the only secret he's harboring is a mastery of the fundamentals.

—
by Michael Zakian

Jeremy Lipking:

Careful Observation, Conscientious Rendering

WHEN JEREMY LIPKING RETURNED TO THE CALIFORNIA ART INSTITUTE (CAI), IN WESTLAKE VILLAGE, TO TEACH A THREE-DAY WEEKEND WORKSHOP THIS PAST SPRING, IT WAS A HOMECOMING OF SORTS.

As enthusiastic students gathered for the first class, everyone noticed a distinctive antique Chinese chair already sitting on the model's stand. Fans of the artist's work immediately recognized it as a prop he has used in some of his best-known paintings. When Lipking arrived and was asked about it, he mentioned that he had brought it for last year's demonstration and had never bothered to pick it up. He knew that it would be waiting for him when he returned for his annual workshop the following year.

Lipking has been holding these spring workshops at the CAI since 2002, and they always sell out well in advance. As usual, eager participants traveled from around the country for the opportunity to learn the secrets of his method. This year students traveled from as far away as Baltimore and Raleigh, North Carolina. There was also a small handful of regulars, including several locals who have taken his workshops before and crave every opportunity to study with the young master.

As an artist highly sensitive to the subtle nuances of light, Lipking designed the workshop to show students how to approach two different lighting situations. The first two days were spent in the studio painting a female model under warm, incandescent light; on the third day, everyone met for a demonstration at a local park in the Santa Monica

Mountains, where Lipking painted the same model posed outdoors in a cool, natural light. It was especially instructive to observe how he used his basic palette to handle two dissimilar types of light.

Lipking began the workshop by introducing his materials and palette. A careful craftsman, he likes the smooth surface of Claessens double-primed Belgian linen, No. 13. The artist prefers two types of brushes: filbert bristle brushes, sizes 8 to 20 for preliminary lay-ins; and Royal Langnickel sable flats (5590), Nos. 4 to 12. His palette is a simple array of the bright mineral colors, arranged from left to right on a glass French Companion as follows: titanium white, cadmium yellow medium, yellow ochre, cadmium orange, cadmium red, alizarin crimson, burnt sienna, ultramarine blue, cobalt blue, viridian, and ivory black. Noticeably absent were the heavy earth tones—the umbers and iron oxide reds—which he rejects as too weighty. One special color the artist keeps on his palette is a cool, light purple that he mixes from alizarin crimson, ultramarine blue, and white. He often turns to this premixed color to modulate skin tones and to create the feeling of atmosphere. For a medium he employs a standard mixture of 1 part stand oil and 1 part dammar varnish to 5 parts mineral spirits.

Lipking began his indoor demonstration by making sure the model assumed an elegant pose. He looked for long flowing lines and an interesting silhouette.



The artist paused often to answer questions. Workshop participants gained insight from the work of former students and instructors of the California Art Institute, which lined the walls of the room.



BELOW RIGHT

The instructor's goal during his indoor demonstration was to capture the dramatic contrast of the model's warm skin tone against the deep red background and dark black dress.

Lipking's Materials

PALETTE

Gamblin, Rembrandt, or Winsor & Newton oils in the following colors:

- titanium white
- cadmium yellow medium
- yellow ochre
- cadmium orange
- cadmium red
- alizarin crimson
- burnt sienna
- ultramarine blue
- cobalt blue
- viridian
- ivory black
- a premixed purple (alizarin crimson, ultramarine blue, and white)

SURFACES

- Claessens double-primed Belgian linen, No. 13
- New Traditions oil-primed linen mounted on birch panel (for outdoor work)

BRUSHES

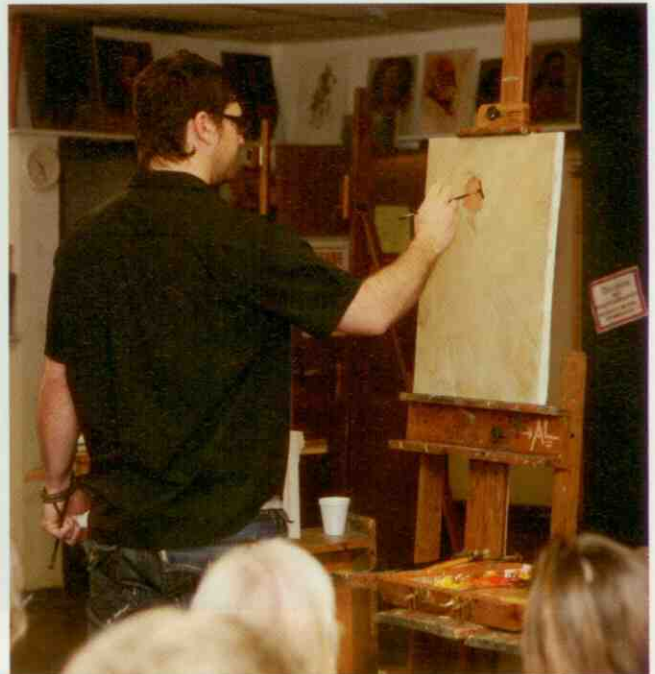
- filbert bristles, sizes 8 to 20
- Royal Langnickel sable flats (5590), Nos. 4 to 12

MEDIUM

- 1 part stand oil and 1 part dammar varnish to 5 parts mineral spirits

OTHER

- Open Box M easel for outdoor painting
- French Companion glass palette



Setting Up the Model and Applying Color

After discussing his materials, Lipking began a demonstration by toning a white canvas with a mixture of burnt sienna and ultramarine blue (his favorite dark), which was generously thinned with mineral spirits. He then wiped the surface with a paper towel to eliminate excess moisture. As he let the surface dry, he turned his attention to posing the model. "This is a very important step," he explained, "because the pose creates the visual dynamics of the composition." While Lipking had the model try different positions, a student asked, "What do you look for when posing a model?" "I look for long lines within the figure and big movements," the instructor responded. "If you don't have energetic pictorial relationships within the figure, it is difficult to make a painting that has energy and life."

Once he decided on a near-profile seated pose for the model, Lipking used a No. 8 Langnickel flat (his main brush throughout the demonstration) and his basic dark (burnt sienna and ultramarine blue) to mark off the large parameters of the silhouette: top and bottom of the head, front and back of the head and torso, and curve of the torso. Drawing was kept to an absolute minimum, but Lipking made sure that the few marks that were drawn were carefully placed and accurate.

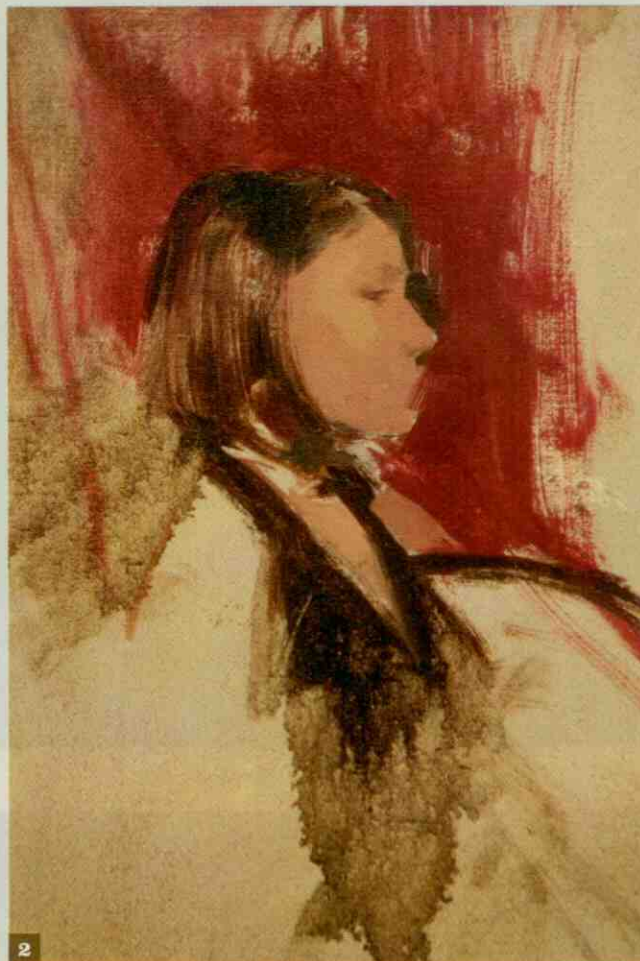
BELOW
During each break, students studied the instructor's painting closely and discussed the decisions he made in each stage.

BOTTOM LEFT
Lipking shared some tips with an advanced student.

BOTTOM RIGHT
The artist attracted a crowd even when working on another student's painting.



Demonstration: Liz



Step 1

After establishing the general placement of the figure using a few long lines, Lipking laid in the general color of the model's face.

Close Up

A close-up view of Step 1, showing how Lipking modeled the light on the cheek and shadow around the eye and nose to create a sense of scale and volume.

Step 2

Before developing the face further, the artist added the general color of the red background and black dress, using thin washes of color.

Step 3

Once the trio of colors was established for the skin, dress, and drapery, Lipking concentrated on modeling the figure's face with small planes of color that varied slightly in temperature and value.



4

Step 4

Lipking continued developing the figure by modeling volumes using subtle changes in the temperature and value of a color.



Step 5

This close-up shows the delicate brushwork used to render the figure's face. The hair was painted as large planes of light and dark brown.

ABOVE RIGHT, THE COMPLETED DEMONSTRATION:

Liz

2007, oil, 24 x 18.

Light is an important element of Lipking's art. The completed demonstration shows how successfully he captured the general mood of the light, as well as specific details of the model's appearance.

FAR RIGHT, THE COMPLETED PAINTING:

Liz

2007, oil, 24 x 18.

Collection Mr. and Mrs. Kevin McGurty.

This is the finished version of *Liz*, which Lipking completed in his studio a few days after the workshop. Using photographs he took of the model, he resolved the lower section of the figure and refined the legs.



5



Lipking pointed out how to correct problems with the drawing of the figure.



After establishing the placement of the figure, Lipking turned his attention to laying in color, beginning with the basic flesh tone of the face. The artist mixed what he called “a wild guess,” using white, cadmium red, cadmium yellow, and a touch of viridian to cool the mixture. “I don’t try to match what I see in front of me,” he said. “I focus on relationships. I want to lay in a color area that I can modify later.” Many of the students thought this flesh color was too dark, but the instructor pointed out that this gives him room to go lighter as he models the forms. Lipking is also famous for using flesh tones that tend toward greenish grays. When he adds touches of warmer color against this predominantly cool base, the passage acquires a magical inner glow, mimicking the appearance of living flesh.

Lipking finds his color the old-fashioned way—by looking, mixing, and matching. Rejecting simple formulas and shortcuts, he typically begins with a mixture of three or four pigments, which he continually modifies to meet his desired

color. Rather than blend colors in discrete mixtures on his palette, he prefers to work with large puddles generated from a base mixture. To test a color, the artist places a dab on his canvas; if it doesn’t look right he continues to mix until he achieves what he wants. As he proceeds he freely modifies this basic pool by introducing additional pigments at the edges. For example, to lower the intensity of a warm tone he adds a cool—a blue or viridian (depending on prevailing light). If that is too gray, he might warm the mixture with cadmium orange. This approach allows him to subtly modulate a color between warmer or cooler, lighter or darker variants of a basic hue. His mastery of these subtle shifts in value and temperature helps give his paintings their powerful illusion of form.

Modeling the Form

To suggest the volume of the head, Lipking added a few touches of darker flesh tone to model the shadows under the eyebrow and nose, but then abruptly stopped. “I don’t

The model was seated in the cool shade of a large tree, which created challenging lighting effects because her entire figure was in shadow.



want to paint too much without adding the background," he explained, "because the bold red will alter how the flesh tones are perceived." Knowing that colors on the canvas influence one another, Lipking's goal was to relate the three large color areas, namely the skin, red background, and the black dress. "This trio of color notes will provide the basis for the entire painting's color harmony, so they have to read well together," the instructor told the class.

Participants in the workshop were most surprised to see that Lipking's actual brushwork was rather loose and free. People assume that since his paintings seem highly realistic, his technique must be precise and meticulous. Just the opposite is true. He tends to work thinly and broadly, laying in large areas of diluted paint to establish basic relationships. As he proceeds to model form, he slows his pace and adds more carefully mixed and precisely placed variations of color to create a sense of volume. The thinness of his paint was surprising to many. Photographs of his paintings in progress

reveal that the underpainting is often little more than a thin, runny wash, but each subtle shift in tone in the first layer is highly deliberate and plays an important role in the finished piece. It is the surprising contrast of his irregular initial brushwork and subsequent small touches of delicate modeling that gives his paintings their uncanny level of illusion.

Stressing the Fundamentals

The students in the workshop spent most of the first morning watching Lipking paint. After lunch, people had grasped enough of his basic method to begin work themselves. As he continued refining his own painting throughout the afternoon, the teacher took frequent breaks and spent time talking to students about their own paintings. Lipking's critiques were careful and thoughtful. He would stand silent in front of the work and study it carefully, almost as if he were trying to assess what steps he would take if it were his own painting. For most of the beginners, the comments focused on pointing

Watch a video of the artist at work in his outdoor studio, and see how he uses color to define form and create a sense of atmosphere in his work.

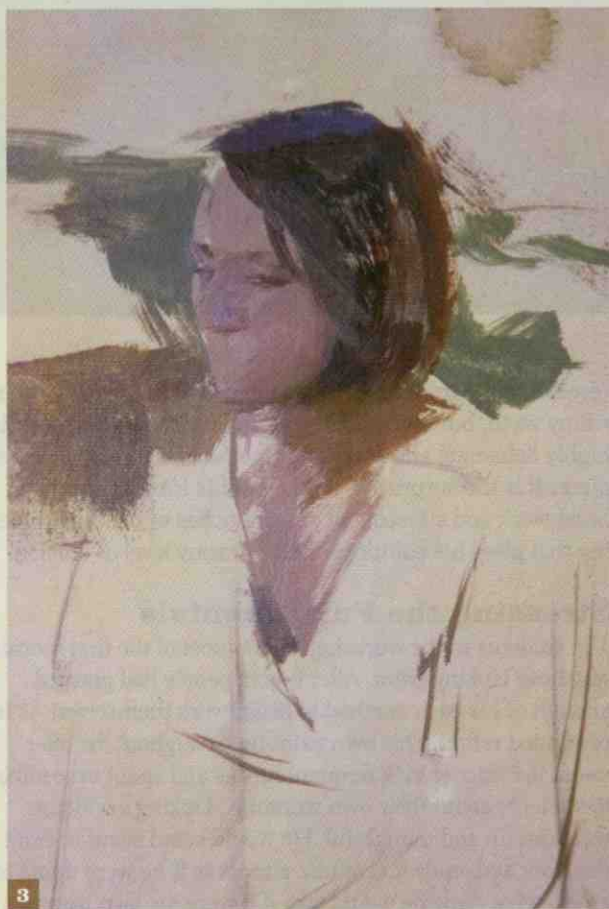
Demonstration: Liz Outdoors



1



2



3



4

Step 1

To begin his outdoor demonstration, Lipking toned his canvas with a thin wash of burnt sienna and ultramarine blue. Lipking's outdoor easel is an Open Box M, which he prefers for its stability and ease of transport.

Step 2

The instructor's goal in applying the initial spots of color was to establish a relationship between the skin tone and the dark hair. He created the flesh color with a cool mixture of yellow and purple.

Step 3

As Lipking modeled the head, he used color to help define planes. He divided the mass of hair into a top plane that had more blue, a side plane (which was the darkest), and a rear plane that contained brown.

RIGHT, THE COMPLETED DEMONSTRATION:

Liz Outdoors

2007, oil, 14 x 11. Collection the artist.

The completed demonstration still had large areas of loose brushwork, which contributed to the lively, spontaneous feel of the finished painting.



Step 4

The color of the dress was a variant of the basic flesh tone and was applied thinly and loosely.

Step 5

Lipking developed the volume of the body by using subtle shifts (lighter or darker, warmer or cooler) of basic color mixtures.

