

Today, let's paint a lion.

So, here's the design you'll use. And David extracted this design from a top, like this one you see here. And this top is part of a set which we restored from home when the studio was out of bounds in April 2020.

And here's an ancient postcard, possibly from 100 years ago, the windows in their original setting: you can see the tops along the bottom row of windows.

And why is there bare glass underneath?

To enjoy the view, of course. So, here you see the view, plus the full set of heraldic windows, which we're restoring from top to bottom.

So, that's the background to this lion. The overall conception belongs to Pugin, the full-size design to John Hardman Powell.

Before we start, what do we see here? From left to right, gum arabic, a bridge, glass paint, and then some painted glass. Yes, these are our test pieces. Test pieces, they are the bits of glass we always paint and fire in order to decide which paints and which sequences of techniques, and which brushes we plan to use. Now, when you do this for yourself, you can work any way which works for you. The thing I stress to you right now is, our deepest conviction is, you will always give yourself the greatest chance of success if you don't make it up as you go along, when you come to do your real piece. When you're doing your test pieces, fine, improvise, try lots of different sequences of techniques, different brushes and so forth - that's fine, but not when you do it for real.

Now, our sequence of techniques, which we will follow in this film, is: the undercoat, copy trace, flood, strengthen (though really we'll flood and strengthen at the same time), highlight, and also what we call 'spottling' which is when we spray paint wet paint across the whole surface of the glass, and this creates an additional effect with the last technique when we soften the highlights.

Now, you can see there are two test pieces. We've spoken through the one on the left. On the right, we used a slightly different approach. A tone of paint across one-half of the glass, and then an undercoat, a wash on top across all of the glass and blended, to give some shadow. Then everything the same.

So, when we paint this lion, we'll do the version on the left. When you do one, do the left or right, anything you want. Just always paint at least one test piece, so that you know where you're going, you know what you're doing. Paint a test piece, paint two, paint ten, paint as many as you need, because the whole thing that matters, it's like learning a piece of music, rehearsing it, or learning a speech, rehearsing it. The thing that matters is that when you come to do it for real, you've got that conviction, that certainty inside you about what you're doing.

Now, what about the smaller rectangles beneath each of those test pieces? Well, as you probably know, we generally work with paints by Reusche. But just before the shutdown, PELI Glass Products sent us samples of other paints they sell, and these are by Ruger and Gunzel, and we chose to test these paints, because though Reusche paints are marvellous, we just felt it's always good to experiment a little. We wanted to make sure we weren't dependent, that we hadn't become stuck in our ways, and that we could, if we needed to, that we could be flexible. So, for the lion, David used maroon, which is, which is a lovely, lovely, creamy paint, far creamier than our usual paint, and it worked really well.

Time to start. Now, in what follows, I'm not really teaching. So, I'm not setting out to answer questions like, 'How do you hold your brush? How do you mix tracing paint? How do you keep your lines, your tracing lines so elegant and long and thin and perfectly even?' These are really big questions. They're wonderful questions, they're big questions, and we've got a course that answers them, because that is where we can give them the space that they deserve. It's what the foundation course, Illuminate, is for. Inside Illuminate, there'll soon be a 70-minute teaching video, which all the graduates of Illuminate will get. Here now, twelve minutes, an overview. Whatever level you are, a newcomer or an advanced glass painter, you'll see whatever you see that relates to your questions and your mind now. And they'll be good questions, and you'll get information about how we do things which relate to what you know right now.

And what's happening here is, we're using glass paint to clean our glass, two bits of glass. The circle, of course, is for the lion, the rectangle is for what we call a companion piece, the piece of glass we use to test the paint, and get comfortable with the technique and the brush before we paint for real.

So, the companion piece is like a test drive. For any given technique, any given brush, you do everything first on the companion piece before you do it on the real piece. On that way, you remind yourself of what it is you're doing. So, now time to lay down the undercoat.

Now, a really good question is, how much do you do on your companion piece? I'm going to spend some time with this, because it is important.

So, the first rule is, you do enough that you're comfortable with whatever it is that you're doing now, which might be tracing, flooding, cutting highlights, whatever it is. You do enough that you feel, yeah, I've got the hang of this technique, I've reminded myself what it feels like. The paint is good, I've got the right brush, the right stick, whatever it is, and I'm confident I can do this now. I know what I'm doing. I'd forgotten what I was doing a few moments ago, and now I'm completely focused on this. So, you do enough that you're comfortable with whatever it is you're doing now.

But that's not enough, that one rule.

So, the second rule is you do enough that you will be able to get comfortable with all the subsequent techniques. You've got to think ahead a bit. So, for instance with tracing, it can happen that you just do one or two strokes with your brush, and you know the paint is good,

and you know the brush is good, and you say, 'Right, that's enough, I'm not gonna do any more.' That wouldn't help you, because you've got to think ahead, what comes afterwards? I've got flooding, strengthening, highlighting, whatever it is. Have I done enough that I can test all those other techniques as well? That's the second rule. You do enough that you know you've done enough for all the techniques that lie ahead.

But even that's not enough.

So the third rule, the third rule is, you mustn't do so much that you become attached to the companion piece. And what I'm getting at here is, the whole point about the companion piece if you like, is it's a place where you feel relaxed about making a mistake. Where, if you make a mistake, you don't go, 'Oh!' And it affects your concentration, and then you make a mess of the real piece, because you've, you've lost your focus. So, it's a space where it doesn't matter that you make a mistake, and my worry is, if people start to say to themselves, 'Look, I really want to finish my companion piece and make it perfect as well' you're bringing all that focus and attention on there, which is good. But maybe you aren't letting things happen which could be really informative about changes you need to make before you do the real piece. So, don't try and finish your companion piece. Leave it as a fragment where you are happy to make mistakes.

(Silence 08.05-09.04).

And there you see our traced lion, photographed on paper.

And now for flooding. Here, revive the paint: always, in between techniques, revive the paint, clean up the palette, reorganise the palette. Make enough paint for the next stage if you possibly can, but at least give yourself enough that you can get going. While you're actually painting, you may find that you need to stop and pause, and that, of course, is fine as well. You'll have to judge that according to your climate, the temperature in your workspace.

So, now flooding on the companion piece to make sure the paint is good, to make sure the brush is good, to adjust to the different pace of working, because flooding needs to move a little bit faster.

(Silence 09.55-10.12).

Now, and here's one thing. For ourselves, what we found when we were doing the test piece is that the space around the lion's head called for a different brush, because there's a big space, quite a large area to fill in, and yet within the mane itself, and strengthening and flooding within the lion's face itself, the small brush was perfect. So, our discovery was, which came out doing the test piece, but it might have come out while doing the companion piece, and that's the whole purpose of these things, is that a different, larger brush was helpful. It may be the case with you that the brush you are comfortable with doing little, small areas of flooding with, you find that the same brush you can use for flooding around the lion's head. Different for us, we definitely a, a brush that could hold a lot more paint, hence that brush you saw us use there.

(Silence 11.00-11.57).

Quite a range of flooding here, as you can see. From wide, large areas to very, very confined areas.

(Silence 12.06-12.55).

And here you see our finished lion. Again, photographed on paper.

Now for the highlights. So, again the companion piece is very, very useful because now you're working in a different way from the bridge, you're working with dried paint, you're cutting through paint, you're pushing down hard with a hard object, and also your non-painting hand is holding the glass, which it doesn't do when you're tracing and flooding. So, lots of things to adjust to there.

Here's the spottling - little flicks, and you let that dry. And when you're sure that it's dry, you rub it gently, which softens the highlights and also where the spots of paint have fallen, it allows you to pull the paint away.

(Silence 13.57-14.44).

The highlighted lion.

Spottling again, you can see those spots going down on the lion. Just checking to see it's dry. Needs a little bit more time to dry, so you can dry it with the blender like that. Rub your hands together to make sure they're not wet, and then rub gently, gently, gently with the ring finger we use over the highlights, over the spots of dried paint, never staying too long in any one place, not dabbing, just rubbing very, very lightly. You don't stay in one place because you move on and then you see what the effect is where you have been, and then you can come back again. When you stay in one place, you don't really know what's happening underneath your hand. And gently, gently, gently lifting off the paint around the highlights and around the spots of flicked paint.

(Silence 15.53-16.17).

And into the kiln, and we generally fire overnight because then the studio warms up a little bit.

So, the next morning, out the pieces come, and they've got a good finish. We soak this paint for ten minutes, because when doing the test piece we found when we didn't soak it at all, it was very, very dry. So, with a ten-minute soak at our normal firing temperature it looks good.

(Silence 16.51-17.06).

And there's my beast resting after a walk before we came into the studio.

And there's the lion.

We hope you paint one, we hope you send us a photograph.

Every best wish from us to you. Talk soon, bye bye.