

Step-by-step: Painting Creatively



Step 1: I always begin with a small drawing (no more than 8x10 inches) to work out the composition. To find the important shapes in a busy scene, I suggest squinting to help blur out descriptive details and keeping your eyes off the center of shapes, where all that descriptive detail is located. Instead, follow the object's outside edge. Imagine that you're cutting out the object with scissors.



Step 2: I establish the two-dimensional relationships of values and colors at the start, rather than get caught up in the details of the figures or objects.



Step 3: With the two-dimensional color and value relationships in place, it's time to "decorate" the painting with shape, value, color, line and texture. By the time I'm done, I've gone back into each and every shape and "decorated" it in some way or another to create an exciting painting surface.



Step 4: Most of us have been taught to finish a painting by adding details, but if you "plug the subject into design" instead, and focus on using the design elements as your personal visual language, you may find that you need less description and detail in your paintings, as I did in *Heart to Heart* (watercolor and gouache on paper, 22x30).