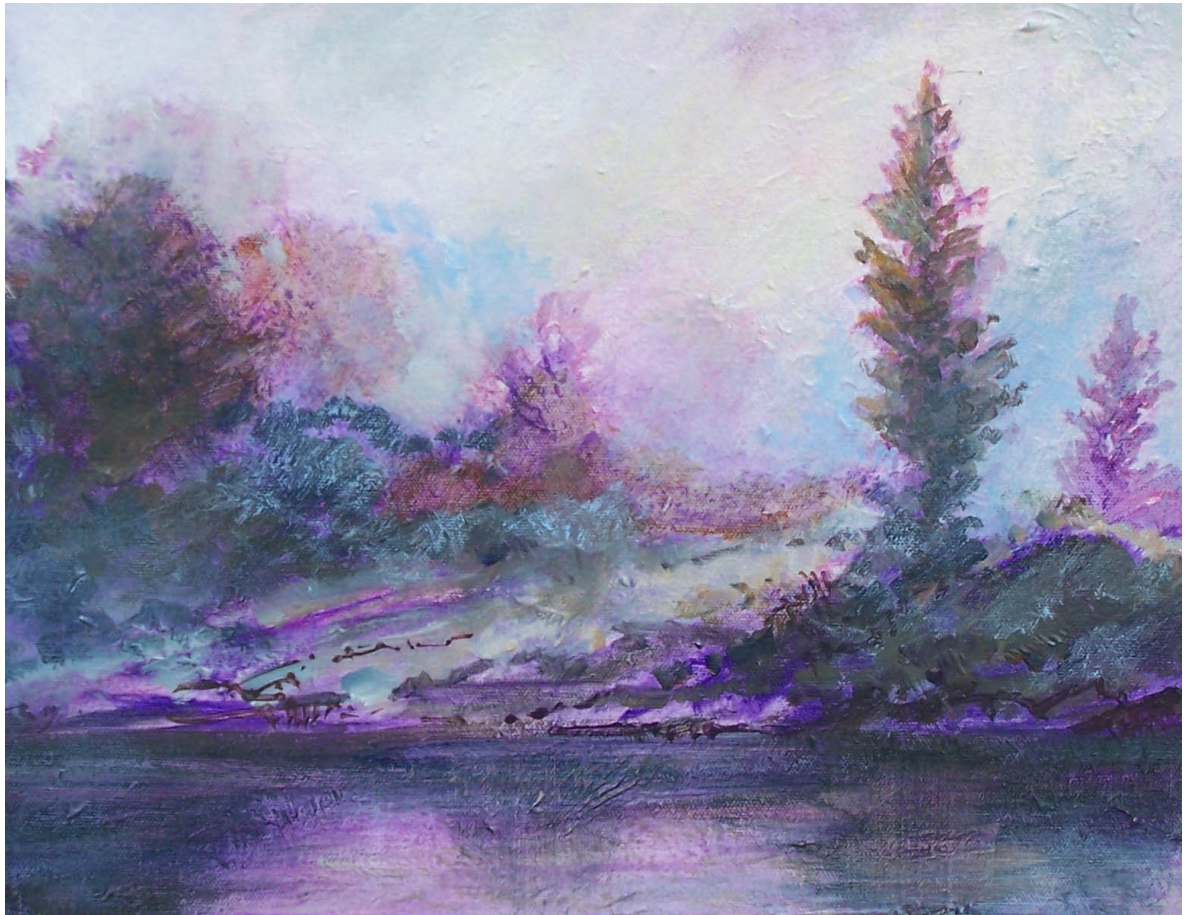


How to paint a misty landscape.



There is something about misty landscapes that most people find appealing. Mist has a way of softening the landscape and creating a sense of mystery. What lies behind the veil?

This project is based on a photo of Lake Poerua, Mt Te Kinga Scenic Reserve, New Zealand, sent to me by Linda Morley with the question “How do I achieve that misty look with acrylics?” Thank you Linda, both for the question and the reference.

There are three main techniques for creating a hazy or misty effect.

1. Paint wet in Wet. Acrylic can be used like watercolour, painting with thin washes, wet in wet to create soft, indistinct edges and shapes, to give the an impression of trees etc. seen through mist.

2. Use a semi-transparent glaze. Mix a tiny amount of blue or grey with a small amount of white and a generous amount of one of the mediums. Apply this over top of the dried painting wherever it's needed. This creates a transparent milky/misty layer

over everything and levels out the tonal contrast. This is also a great way to add distance to mountains in your paintings. Remember oil mediums appear milky when wet, but they dry clear, so you may need to do one glaze, let it dry, and then see if another is needed.

The same technique can be used for painting something like a dust storm, but instead of using blue, one of the earth colours like yellow ochre or Raw Sienna would be used.

3. Scumbling. This is using an opaque or semi opaque colour, spread so thinly over a dry underpainting it creates a hazy appearance. I find holding the brush like a magic wand, instead of using the pencil grip and using the side of a brush, rather than the tip, allows for a lighter touch which is perfect for this effect.

For misty landscapes: use mainly cool colours; remember white always cools whatever it is added to; keep tonal contrast low, especially the distant objects; soften edges with smudging, again especially as you move further back in the landscape.

Project - Materials 16"x20" canvas
 Colours – Dioxine Purple, Cobalt Blue Hue, Orange
 Brushes – #12 Flat hogs hair bristle
 #2 White taklon liner
 Mediums - Clear painting medium



Reference – Lake Poerua, New Zealand



Step 1.

Begin with a line drawing in chalk to establish the composition.

I was heavy handed with my drawing for the sake of the photograph to illustrate this step. Your drawing can be done quite lightly. It only needs to be dark enough for you to see.

The right hand side of the photo was also cropped so that the reference would be the same proportions as my canvas.



Step 2.

Using a single colour create a tonal map.

I like purple so that was what I used. I could just as easily have used Paynes Grey or any other dark colour.



Step 3

Notice the difference between this and the previous picture.

Softened edges and a lighter tone have been used to create a visual bridge that invites the viewer's eye to cross the dark middle section and enter further into the painting. Without that, the attention of the viewers eye would be arrested and held by the hard edges and sharp contrast of the shoreline, in the middle of the painting.



Step 4

Using the underpainting as a guide to tone, add colour.

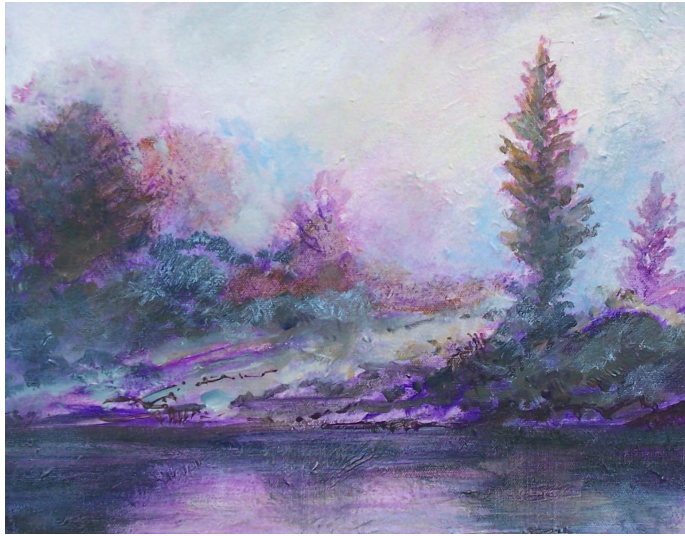
A limited palette of complementary colours, Cobalt Blue and Orange, to mix the various greys and browns, keeps colour choices simple and guarantees colour harmony.

Don't completely cover your underpainting. Allow some of it to show through the top layers. This does two things for the painting: it makes it more interesting and also helps create unity.



If you are aiming for an accurate representation of the subject step back regularly from your easel. Hold the reference at arms length and stand at the distance where it appears to be the same size as the painting.

Holding the reference beside the painting in this way makes it very easy to spot differences between the two, which can then be corrected accordingly.



Step 5

Once the broad areas of colour are established some small suggestions of detail can be added with the liner brush.

Notice the composition of the close up. It would be very easy to make this the basis for a second painting. Always be on the lookout for such opportunities. One painting can sometimes be a springboard to many others.



Step 6

Final adjustments.

You may choose to warm some of the mist with a thin, almost imperceptible, pale wash of orange, to create the impression of morning sun touching the mist. This also provides a subtle contrast to all the cool colours that have been used.