

Painting a Master Copy

Extended Workshop with Sabine Baeckmann-Murray

Presented by the Waterway Art Association

Dates: February 4, 11, 18, & 25, 2026

Time: 10:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Location: CB Berry Center, 2250 SE 179, Little River, SC 29566



Workshop Description

This extended workshop focuses on the time-honored practice of creating a *Master Copy*—a painted study based on a masterwork by a historically significant artist. Rather than imitation for its own sake, the goal is careful investigation: understanding *how* great paintings were built and *why* they work.

By working directly from a master painting, students will explore composition, color relationships, value structure, edge control, brushwork, and overall pictorial design. Each student will select a single masterwork and devote the full course to thoughtfully interpreting it, allowing time for layering, revision, and refinement.

This workshop is designed for **intermediate to advanced painters** who are ready to slow down, look closely, and engage deeply with the painting process.

Why Paint a Master Copy?

Creating a master copy allows artists to step inside the decision-making process of highly skilled painters. Each brushstroke, color choice, and compositional adjustment reveals information about the artist's intent and technique. Through this process, students are not merely copying an image—they are learning to *decode the visual language* of master painters.

This practice strengthens:

- Observational skills
- Color mixing accuracy
- Understanding of value and temperature
- Confident, purposeful brushwork
- Overall painting discipline and patience

The insights gained often translate directly into stronger original work.

Choosing a Master Painting

Students are encouraged to explore painters they admire, preferably artists working **prior to 1900***, as these works often exemplify strong foundational painting principles. High-resolution images from museum websites and quality art books are excellent reference sources.

Before the workshop begins, students will submit **up to three potential paintings** for instructor review. From the approved selections, each student will choose one painting to serve as their master copy for the duration of the course. Guidance with color palettes, materials, and format will be provided as needed.

* More modern artists works may be submitted if their subjects fit the tenor of the workshop. For example, if you love painting wildlife, Robert Bateman would be an acceptable master to copy.

Materials & Skill Level

- **Medium:** Oil (preferred), acrylic, or water-soluble oils
- **Canvas size:** Minimum **18" x 24"** (larger may be appropriate depending on the original painting)
- **Level:** Intermediate to advanced painters only
- **Materials:** Most students at this level already have a solid supply of preferred paints and brushes. Bring what you are most comfortable with, but don't hesitate to contact me with questions.

A detailed suggested **materials and tools list** will be provided prior to the workshop.

Class Structure & Instruction

Students will begin the workshop on an **imprimatura-prepared canvas**, which should be completed **prior to the first class session**. This allows us to use in-class time efficiently and focus immediately on structure, paint handling, and color relationships rather than surface preparation.

Students also have the **option of lightly sketching their approved master painting in advance**, should they prefer. Alternatively, compositional sketching can be completed during the first session using paint. Either approach is acceptable and will be discussed individually to suit each student's working style.

From this foundation, paintings will develop in structured stages—beginning with establishing proportion, major shapes, and edges, followed by block-ins and successive refinement. Emphasis will be placed on working thoughtfully and deliberately, allowing the painting to evolve through careful observation and adjustment.

Throughout each session, the class will examine what makes the selected masterworks exemplary paintings. Discussion and demonstration will address:

- Composition and pictorial design
- Value structure and focal emphasis
- Color relationships, temperature, and harmony
- Brushwork, edges, and surface quality

Regular group discussions and peer-sharing moments will allow students to learn not only from their own work, but also from observing the challenges and breakthroughs of fellow artists.

Workshop Intensity

Because this is a sustained, multi-session project, students should expect a **focused and immersive experience**. The four-week format allows time between classes for reflection, optional at-home work, and problem-solving, making it ideal for a project of this scope and ambition.

Picking a Master Work

Send at least **THREE images** of master works you'd like to use as reference to Sabine at **sabinebaeckmannart@gmail.com**. Please include the master artist's name and indicate order of preference on your submissions. Be prepared to share why you chose your piece to paint during this workshop.

Are you a bit lost as to which masters to look at? Please contact Sabine by email or text **(716) 704-5588** with your questions. I'd be happy to help you narrow down your choices.

