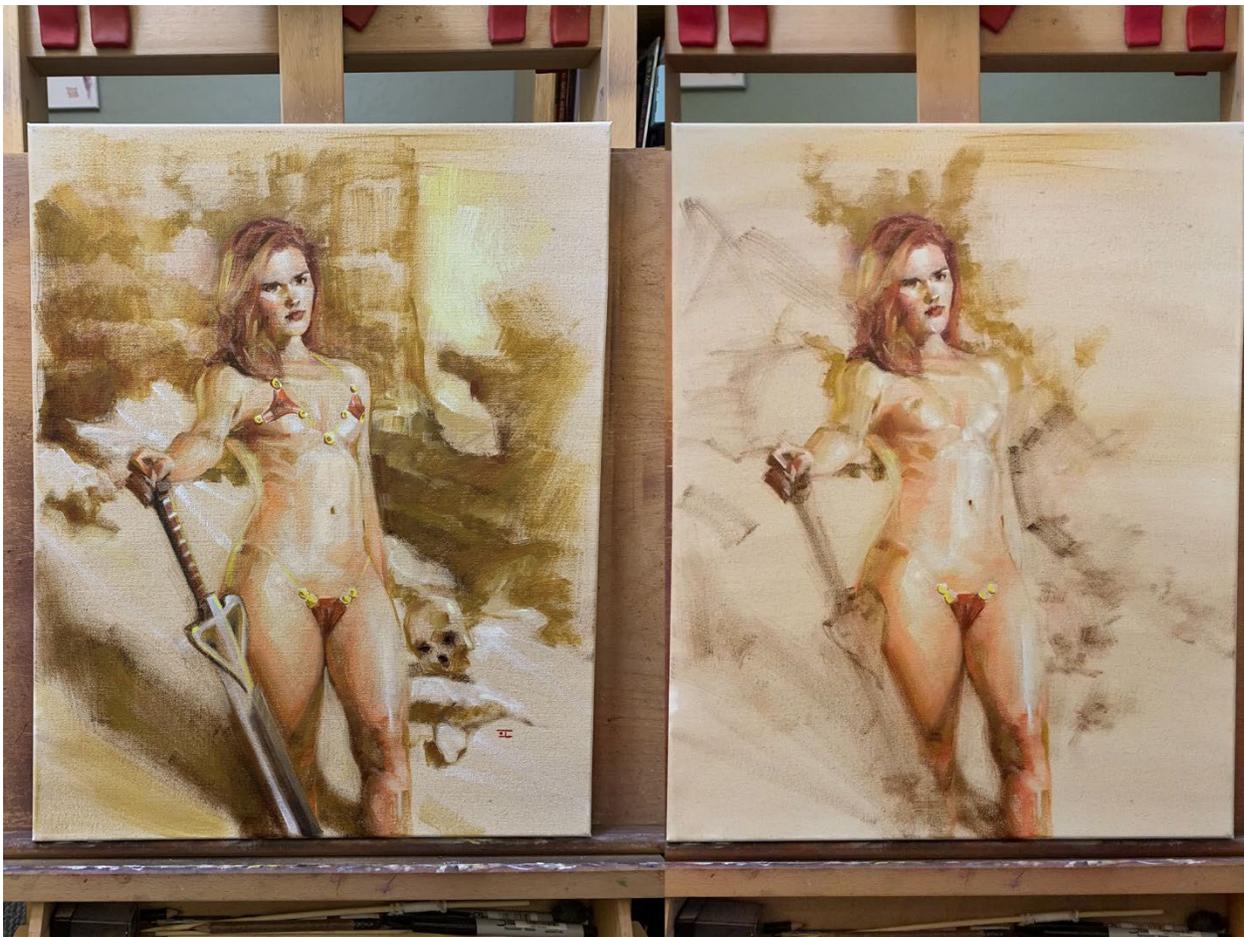


Oil Painting is Easy

Edward Carlos - *A brief article about my sketching in oil process.*

Ask most people to describe oil painting and they are likely to tell you one of two things: either it's a long process requiring years of training, or good paintings are only done by freakishly talented artists. Neither of these assumptions is correct.

Oil paintings are notorious for long drying times and slow progress; however, a thin layer of oil paint can be dry to the touch in a few days. And, if the paint is the correct consistency, each layer of paint can be built up without any waiting time.



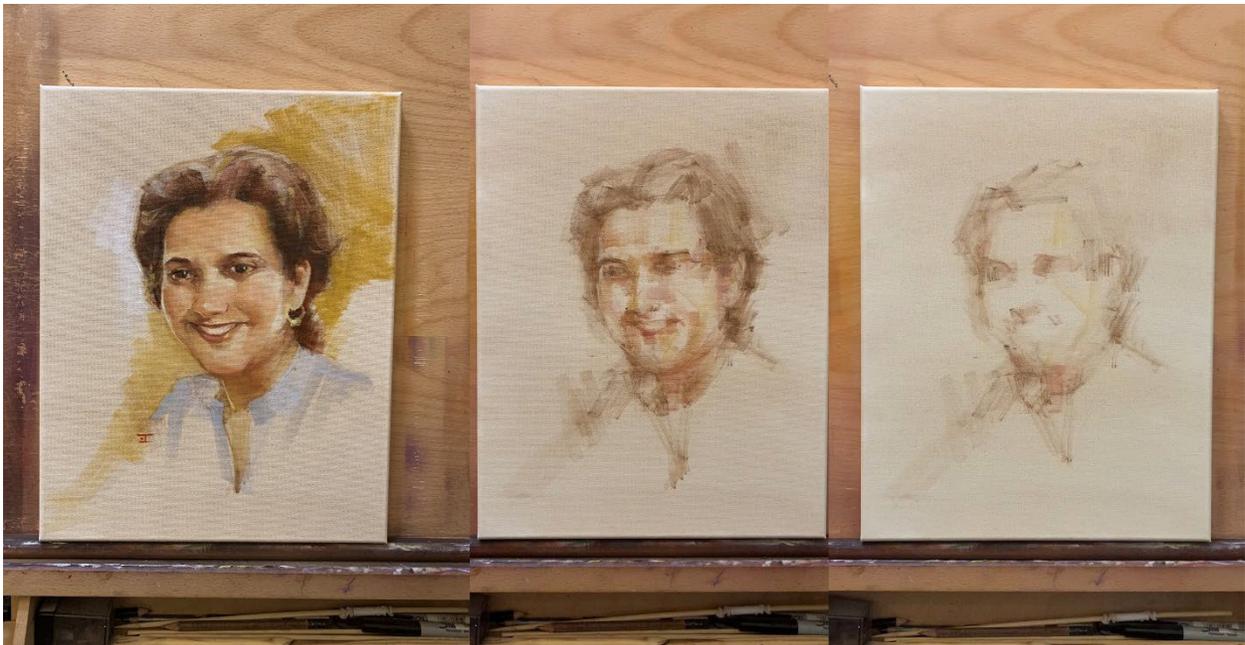
Another misconception about painting in oil is that they are dangerously toxic. Although the use of solvents requires good ventilation, oil paints are very safe when handled properly. There are a few colors that are toxic; mostly cadmium but I choose not to use those colors (I honestly don't feel the need for cadmium colors).

These misconceptions are often the main obstacle for many people who want to learn oil painting and why I prefer to think of my paintings as oil sketches rather than paintings. Sketching in any medium is fast and loose, without constrictions. I often finish the main work of a picture in a single day with a day or two adjusting and touching up.

The tools required for oil painting can be very simple: a selection of colors (primaries are very versatile), oil medium for thinning paint, a selection of brushes, a surface to paint on (I buy stretched canvases on sale), and solvent for cleaning. I'll write more about color selection and solvents in a moment.



Sketching can start anyway the artist likes. I start by toning my canvas with a neutral brown mixed with solvent (be sure to use good ventilation or do this part outdoors). This lets plenty of light bounce off the surface but also allows me to paint in white highlights. I don't bother with an under drawing or tracing a picture. I like the energy and speed of working directly on a fresh canvas. Using a selection of colors thinned with refined linseed oil, I loosely rough in the general shapes and shadows. Then I add some basic color. I begin my pictures with warm colors and add cool colors as the picture progresses.



To achieve a more complex color scheme, I use a double palette of neutrals combined with more saturated primaries. However, a full range of colors can be achieved from just four tubes of paint: three primary colors (yellow, red, and blue) and white.

This might sound too simple but that's because it is simple. Even using solvents should not be a barrier to learning oil sketching. Water-soluble oil paints and solvent free mediums are available for artists who would rather work without solvents. I prefer the old-fashioned methods, however, anyone wanting to learn oil painting has options.



If you want to learn to paint in oil it's easy to learn and challenging enough to make it a lifetime practice.