

Child portrait
in
7
stages



Child's oil portrait tutorial in 7 steps

I am in the habit of taking progress photos of my work often and have a lot I could share on my blog. It is time to bring it all out to share inside of hiding away in my computer. This is portrait of a little boy I met in India late 2009. He was so adorable in his new church suit. I appropriately named this painting *A Child's Prayer*.



Stage 1: I began blocking in shapes. I squint to block out details and focus on the big shapes. This also helps when judging tones. Keeping my colours simple I began to create a form. At this stage I am looking for an approximate shape and not accuracy or likeness.



Stage 2: I began to make more accurate strokes on the face and hands. Much time is spent pushing and pulling these features into shape. Portraits are challenging. Never stress over the likeness at the early stage. Simply look closer, at the abstract shapes, judging angles and proportions of each one. The face comes together more easily if seen as parts rather than a whole.



Stage 3: I worked the face more. As the face developed I needed to work the background. This ensures I get a nice soft edge and the portrait doesn't look cut out. In my reference there were people in the background so this one is entirely invented. I used a soft green grey to contrast against the beautiful skin of the little boy.



Stage 4: Now it is time to move into the clothing, adding a little more blue and focusing on the folds - not every one of them, only enough to tell the story.



Stage 5: I have avoided the hands and feet long enough. Foreshortened body parts are the biggest challenge! It is time to be brave so in I go, again breaking down the shapes so the simplicity paints the impression for me.



Stage 6: In this stage I work the whole painting, fine-tuning all over until I am happy with the shapes and tones.



A Child's Prayer

Stage 7: More colour is added. I work the background again and the clothing until I have the look I am after. In any portrait I work all areas several times until I get the result I am after. Sometimes it comes quickly and sometimes it is pain painstakingly drawn out. This one flowed well. I had a love for the subject and I think it shows - I hope so anyway. Sorry about the glare from the light on the painting.