

## Tip #15

### *Feature Focus - Painting Eyes*

It's excellent practice to focus on a feature that's a challenge to you. Some of us find noses difficult to "get" correctly, for others the mouth with all its expressions is an area in need of practice. Eyes used to be that feature for me, and as often happens, in the process of practicing, I learned to LOVE painting or drawing them.



Eyes really are the windows of the soul, and they're capable of great depth or emotion. Still, it can be tricky to get it right...position, shape, direction of glance, age or even the sex of the subject can be interesting to capture.

#### **Art 15-1, art - Seeing Eyes -- really!**

Often, when we're starting out drawing humans (or animals!), we think of the eye in "shorthand," using symbolic thinking. We draw something that looks sort of like a basketball stuck in the middle of a canoe! But by using a combination of contour drawing, negative space and direct observation, we can give a great deal of life to our depiction of eyes!



Art 15-1

#### **Art 15-2, art - Eye Sketch, charcoal**

Remember that the eyeball is just that-an almost completely round ball. Try to capture the sense of roundness, even though the lids cover part of the orb, top and bottom. Shadows will help, as will the shape and placement of the highlight, as you see here in this charcoal sketch.



Art 15-2

#### **Art 15-3, art - The Eyes Have It**

Practice using a variety of positions and expressions. Eyes from the side look very different from ones that meet your gaze straight on. Consider how they can show pain, sadness, mischief, resolution, peace. These show a wide range of emotions...

The shape of the eyelid adds to the effect, of course...notice carefully where the widest part of the eyelid is (often over the most rounded area of the eye itself, unless your subject is looking up), and watch how it tapers to the corners. Wrinkles add patina and character, of course!



Art 15-3



Art 15-4

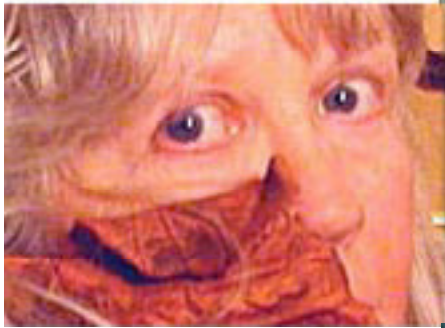
Whether you're working in color or black and white, as in the first drawing, remember that the iris usually has variations in color and shadow-it's not a flat, solid color.

#### **Art 15-4, art - "The Intensity of His Gaze," Collage/Painting**

You can really see how the light affects your model-in this painting/collage, the eye in strongest light is a much lighter blue than the eye in shadow. Trust your observations and your work will have much more impact.

#### **Art 15-5, art - Using Photos for Resources**

If you don't have a handy model, use photos-of yourself or someone else. Here, I used a snapshot of myself half-hidden behind one of my terra cotta wall sculptures, but took off in an entirely imaginative direction for the fantasy painting detail you see here.



Art 15-5

