



Face value

LUCY STOPFORD is a British artist whose portraits are conveyed through the delicate balance between realism and abstraction. Here she shows you how she created two in just an hour and a half each

IN SPITE OF FOLLOWING the conventional route of Art School training, my most formative experience was studying the sight size method in Florence, between my Foundation Course and degree in Fine Art. It was under the tuition of Charles H Cecil in the atelier tradition, where students paint alongside tutors. I studied the rigour of accurate observation through working to scale from life, walking back from the easel between each brush stroke for accuracy. I discovered that constant correction allows a freedom from sentimentality and permission to dare, which has informed my approach ever since.

Although I have adapted the method to

working Alla Prima or wet on wet, the essentials of the discipline remain helpful to get to the essence of my subject. I always work from life, in a combination of natural and artificial light, and walk back regularly from the easel to see the model from a distance so that I can focus on the whole rather than be distracted by detail.

If I had a mantra it would be "simplify, simplify, simplify." Rather than drawing the image first and then painting, I like to explore the subject in paint, to carve the image out of brush strokes, building a portrait with a scaffold of individual marks. I do this by adding and reducing information until the image is conveyed through a limited number of deliberate and definitive brushstrokes. ►

**GET
10% OFF
THESE ITEMS**
at cassart.co.uk/stopford
with code
STOPFORD10*

LUCY'S MATERIALS

Paints

Old Holland or Michael Harding oil colours: Titanium White, Lemon Yellow, Cadmium Yellow, Cadmium Red, Alizarin Crimson, Ultramarine Blue and Prussian Blue. "I use a limited palette, sometimes called the Impressionist Palette, from the Micheal Harding or Old Holland range both available from Cass Art, with a range of warm and cool, light and dark primary colours for speed.

Squeeze out a generous amount of each colour, so as not to starve the palette, laying out the colours from light to dark to create a spectrum of tone and value. I don't use turpentine, which would dilute the consistency of the paint, but linseed oil to increase its slippery quality."

Mediums

Michael Harding Non-Absorbant Acrylic Primer in Neutral Grey 7, Winsor & Newton Refined Linseed Oil

Brushes

Cass Art Hog Bristle Brush set of 6, Omega Lily Varnish brush size 20mm and 30mm (select a suitable size for your canvas).

"I use one size for each painting, following Picasso's advice to provide coherence when using an abstract approach."

Canvas

Cass Art Natural Linen 11.3oz Canvas Exhibition Grade Quality any size

Easel

A Mabef Mo6 Studio Easel. "This needs to be upright to avoid distortion, level with the subject so that it is possible to visualise how the head will fit on the canvas. I use a canvas primed with a mid-tone which is a good base on which to set down the values of light and dark."

HOW TO

Tim

1 FIRST HALF HOUR

To begin, I stand back from the primed canvas, squint to reduce detail further, and loosely block in the background at speed. This sets the composition, the value range and the outline of the head from the start. I then begin to build up the face by identifying the brow, the nose and mouth with broad – but specifically placed – marks and, soon, the structure of the skull beneath the skin begins to appear. Everything at this early stage is very fluid and laid down as a beginning to correct during the further sittings.



2 SECOND HALF HOUR

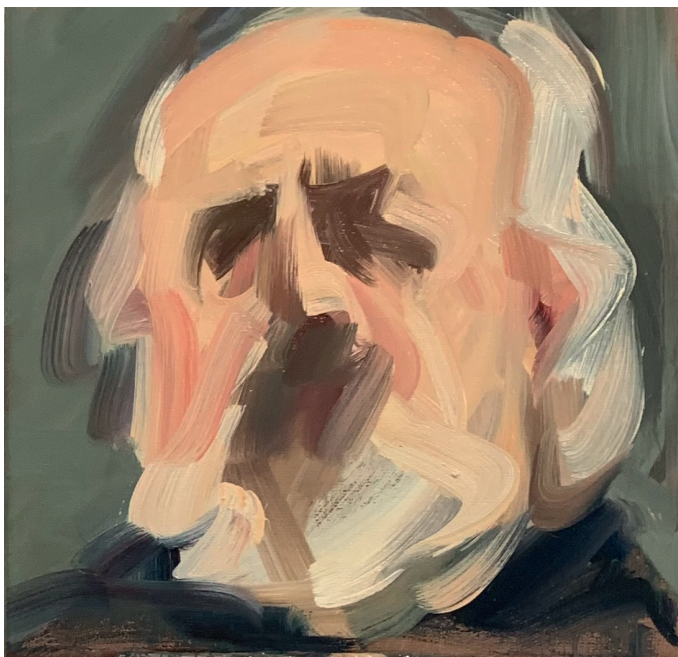
I cut into the early loose brushstrokes refining the image through further considered and decisive marks, almost as if carving into a sculpture. The underpainting remains left last, as it is, as a useful early exploration and provides substance both literally with thicker paint and in terms of observation.



3 FINAL HALF HOUR ►

Here requires further refining with brushes of the same size, taking care to leave what works, and working over the whole image including the background with equal energy to provide coherence in the finished piece. I can remember the final mark I made on this painting – the dark shadow to the left of the mouth defining the beard.





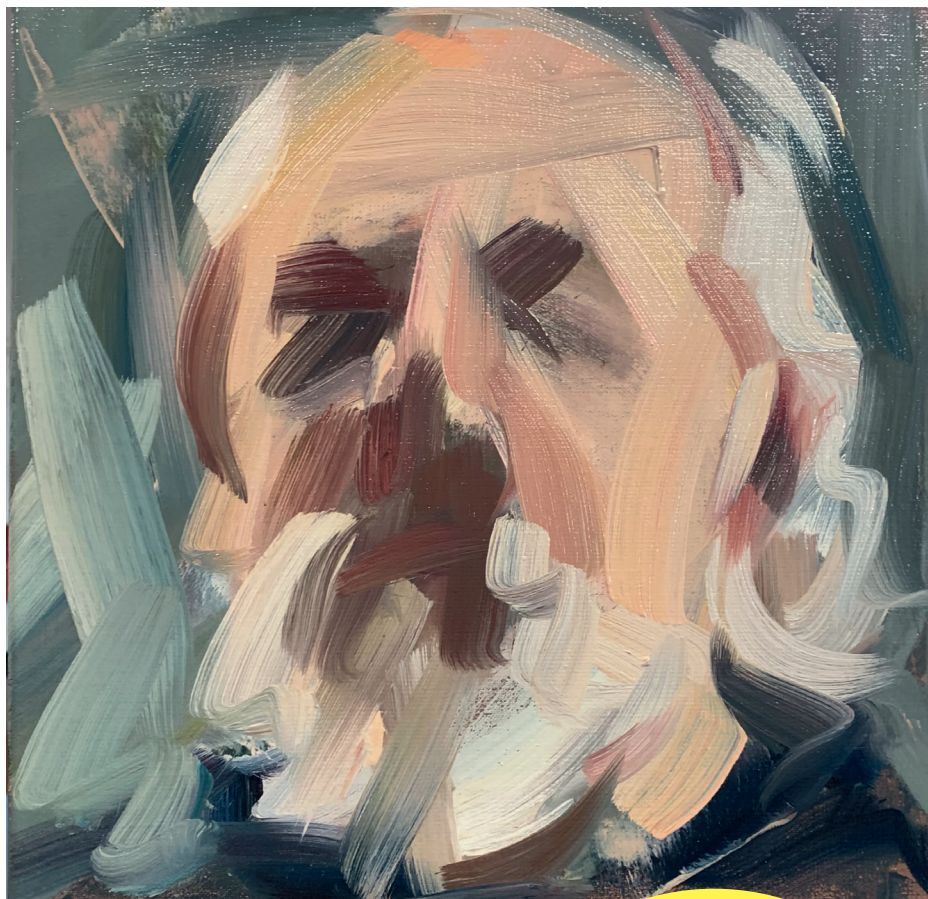
Barney

1 FIRST HALF HOUR

Mixing the paint on the palette – for speed – and wiping the brush between each mark on a rag, I start by describing the background in broad strokes to create the outline of the head. In this portrait, I painted with fluid curved marks following the outline of the head to establish the composition and value range.

2 SECOND HALF HOUR

By constantly re-evaluating and correcting the image, the paint becomes less brash and more bespoke. It's now that the shapes and the likeness emerges. Keeping the brushwork loose helps to convey the energy of working from life and allows for intuitive response to the subject.



3 THIRD HALF HOUR

The finished image. 'Paintings are never finished, merely abandoned'. Working from the model in half hour sittings sets a strict time frame which can help prevent overworking. Working Alla Prima means stepping away from the painting without returning to work further on it, seeing it as a record of the experience.

lucystopford.com

**EXCLUSIVE
OFFER FROM
CASS ART!**

Find everything you need for this tutorial online at cassart.co.uk/stopford and get **10% off!**

Simply enter code **STOPFORD10** at the online checkout*

*TERMS & CONDITIONS: OFFER IS VALID ON LIMITED PRODUCTS SUGGESTED BY LUCY STOPFORD. OFFER AVAILABLE ONLINE AT CASSART.CO.UK/STOPFORD ONLY. NOT VALID IN-STORE. OFFER CANNOT BE USED IN CONJUNCTION WITH ANY OTHER OFFER. ONE USE PER PERSON. OFFER EXPIRES 23:59:59 ON 30TH NOVEMBER 2022.