

Botanical Art for Beginners

Part 4 Vegetables: Shiitake Mushrooms



Moving on to vegetables and fungi, many such subjects have some similar features to those previously explored in the fruit and leaf part of the course, with rounded forms and various textures. This particular tutorial focuses on fungi, which is a useful exercise in creating texture.

Lighting

As always make sure that the lighting is good on your subject, you should be used to this advice by now but I will continue to mention it albeit not in the same detail as before as you should now be familiar with the practice of using a lamp positioned at one side of the subject to create light and shade.

Stage 1. Form and Tone

Step 1. Observe: Think Shape, Measure and Draw

- As in the previous exercise, observe and gather as much information as possible before starting.
- Take measurements of the subject. Height, width and widest point of the fruit are the most important measurements.
- Mark out the basic measurements within a box shape.
- Make an outline drawing.
- Make a rough 'cross-contour' drawing of the subject within the box. You can also plot the highlight and form shadow on the cross-contour drawing.
- When you are happy with the drawing, transfer it to the watercolour paper, using tracing paper.

Step 2 Tonal Value Drawing (using light and shade)

- If you have time, make a monochrome study of the subject, you can do this with black paint, ink or a neutral tint mix. Again, you have previously made monochrome studies, so I won't repeat the detail but this activity will help you to understand the different tones in the subject without the confusion of colour.



Stage 2. Painting

Step 1. Before starting work out the colours:

Make colour notes and work out *all* colour mixes, paint colour swatches and make notes for reference, as shown.



1. For the underlying colour, use a mix of cobalt blue and quinacridone magenta to create the violet colour. I use this for shadows and to lightly paint the gills under the cap.
2. The basic hue brown. Use 3 reds, Quinacridone Magenta, Cobalt Blue and Transparent Yellow to mix the various lighter browns.
3. For the darker browns add Indanthrene Blue.
4. The gills are a warmer creamy brown, use Scarlet Lake and Lemon Yellow nickel titanate for this as a very light was.
5. A little white Gouache will be added at the end on the cap to create some texture.

Step 2. First wash, apply underlying violet colour

Add the underlying violet colour lightly and selectively to shade areas on the stalk, cap and gills using a size 4 series 7 miniature or similar brush. On the gills the pale colour is used to paint the shadow between the gills, keep the colour light as shown below.

Allow to dry completely

Step 3. Selective application of Brown to stalk and cap

Mix the light brown and add colour to the stalk and cap, you may dampen the cap area first. Build up gradually bear in mind the depth of tone on the lighter stalk compared to the darker cap.

Once dry remove any pencil lines.

Step 4. Build Colour and Form:

When dry, dampen with the wash brush on the cap and start to build more colour gradually

Then use the darker brown mix on the cap to create more depth of colour in selected darker areas.

Repeat the process on a second mushroom, see over the page.





Step 5. Build Depth and Detail:

Switch to a smaller brush, such as a size 1 or 2 miniature or detail brush. Start to build depth working with the dry brush modelling technique to build the form shadow colour and detail on the fibrous cap and stalk to create texture. Your paint should be thicker during this process, dry off the excess on spare paper before adding. Remember to refer to the introductory watercolour technique videos and exercises for reference.

Finally, pick out detail. I added small blemishes, using a concentrate mix of the shadow colour. I also used a tiny amount of white gouache for the ragged surface on the cap.



Exercise:

Paint 2 or 3 mushrooms from different angles, following the general guidance from this tutorial.

Start by making a drawing, a tonal study and then a final painting, using these steps and the video for guidance.

When you have finished all of the vegetable paintings and preparatory studies from Part 4, please email them to coursework@botanicalart-online.com