

Sketching with oil, The Grisaille

A short introduction by David op De Beeck
www.davidopdebeeck.com

Hey guys, I'm David op De Beeck an amateur artist from Belgium. I'm going to demonstrate how to create a sketch using oil paint. I used to be scared of using oils, mainly because you can't just go to the store and ask give me everything I need to start an oil painting and then hope it all works out with no prior knowledge of technique and solvents and all the crap you need to know and have to paint using oils.

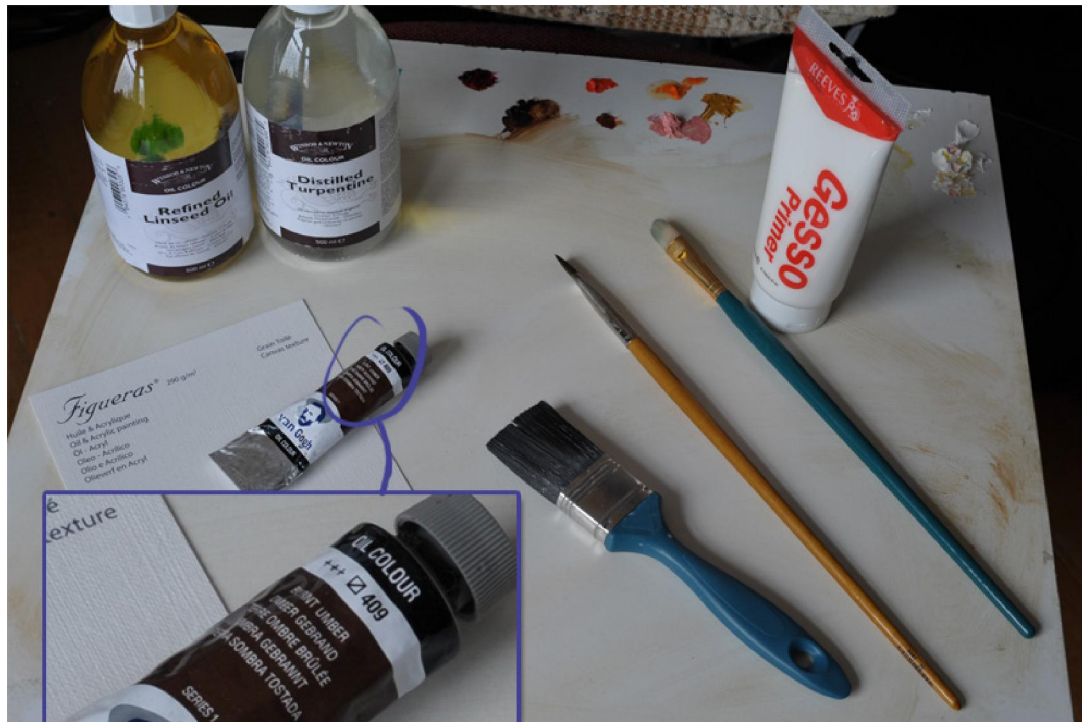
So I stayed away from it until recently and I found out it's awesome. That's why I write this short tutorial for all you guys who are like me. You like dry materials like charcoal and pencils and stuff, you like sketching, well give the technique shown in this tutorial a try and you'll see you were missing out on a whole new world of fun.

What I'll demonstrate is the minimum you need to have and know to paint a simple grisaille alla prime. Translated that would be a monochromatic painting in one sitting.

Here is a work I did last week: It's painted from live, a 1 hour sitting.



What you need



You need

- Thick paper
- Gesso: I show a small tube in the photo but you should buy it in a larger quantity. I usually buy it in a 1 liter can. And I take the cheapest Gesso I can get.
- Turpentine
- Linseed Oil
- A few brushes (good ones preferably)
- 1 tube of Burnt Umber oil paint
- A big brush (cheap one) to smear gesso on your paper
- Paper towels (the stuff that looks like an oversized roll of toilet paper)
- Some sort of palette to mix paint on. I use a wooden board that was once part of an old cupboard. The most important thing is that it should not absorb the paint to much, so wood with varnish on it will work. An old plate for instance would be just as good, something with a smooth surface.

That's pretty much it. The only additional thing you need is something to wash your brush with after you are done. You can use Mineral turpentine like white spirit or anything petroleum based. Buy the cheapest, it's for washing brushes, you'll need a lot of it. In art stores you can get odorless mineral spirits that are more pleasant to work with.

The process



Put gesso on paper and let it dry. Use the gesso straight from the container, no need to thin it down with water. Fill your entire page with it. The reason to use paper and not a real canvas is because its cheaper and these are sketches just to practice. Painting on canvas, while fun, feels like such a commitment, specially when you are just starting out. You don't do a half an hour sketch on canvas. You can but sketches pile up quickly.



Next step is to prepare your medium, you use your medium like you would use water when painting with Watercolor. Make a mixture of $\frac{2}{3}$ turpentine and $\frac{1}{3}$ linseed oil. Mix it in a large container that you can close because turpentine evaporates.

Then take a small canister like the one in my photo and put some medium in it. This minimizes the amount that will evaporate while you work. You need very little.

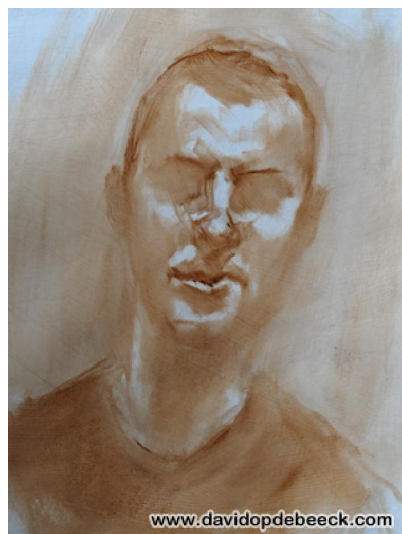
Put some burnt umber on your palette add a wee bit of medium and lets get started.

Painting some dude

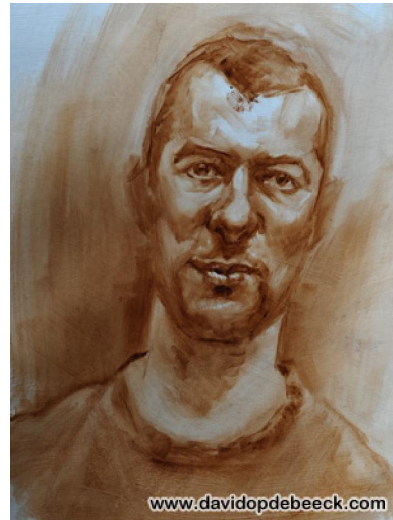
Now that all the technical stuff is behind us the fun starts. Just start to block in light and shadow. Pretty much the same process you would use when using charcoal.



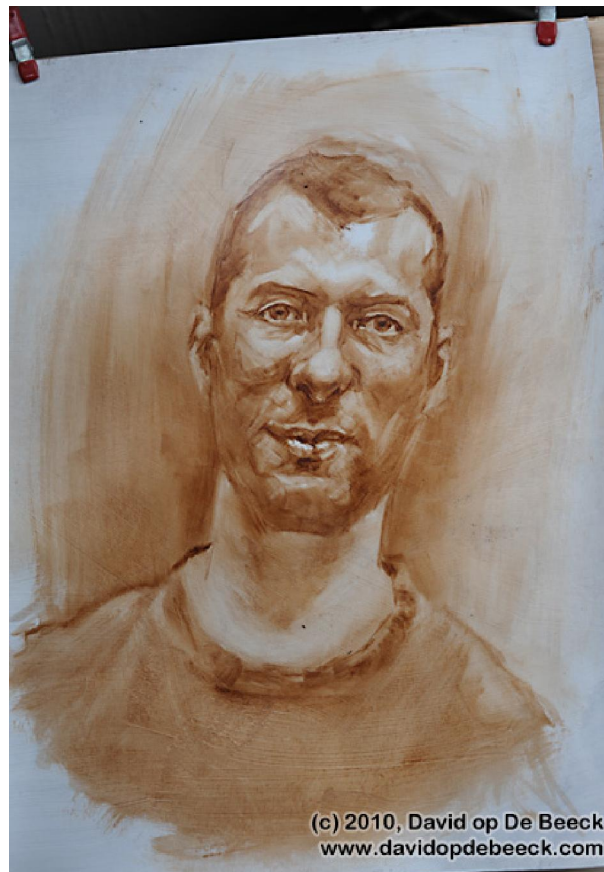
You can use the paper towel to blend the paint together. I start out by drawing with my brush, putting down lines like I would using a pencil. Then I use the paper towel to blend and smear. This is a very forgiving process as you can easily remove paint using a clean brush dipped into your medium. A clean brush with turpentine on it works like an eraser. So don't worry too much about not everything being where it's supposed to be, just keep it loose.



Just sculpt out light and shadow.



And the Final result:



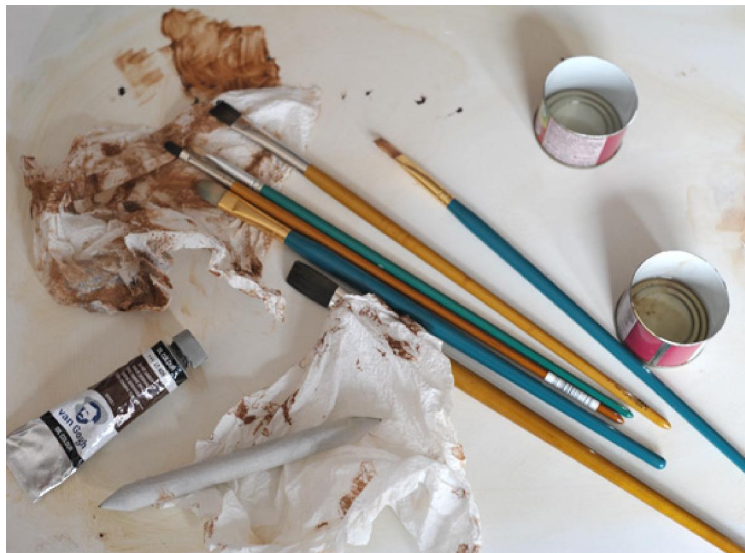
This was how I paint a grisaille using oils. I'm not saying this is the way to go but it works for me, for now. It's fun and I hope you try it out.

Cleaning up

Afterwards you can pour your medium back from your small cup into the canister holding your mixture. Don't worry about it not being 100% clean, the paint will sink to the bottom of the can and your mixture will stay pure.

Clean your palette with paper towel, if you let it dry up you won't be able to clean it afterwards.

Clean your brushes or they will dry out and become hard and unusable. Just ask for something to clean brushes for oil paints in an art store.



Have fun guys!!

Cheers

David op De Beeck
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