

Bluebell Woodland

watercolour

32cm by 26 cm

I picked this subject for the complementary colour relationship between purples and yellow greens, and to explore the rich textures in a bluebell woodland.

Using a range of photographic reference, I composed a pencil drawing first, detailing the bluebells and foreground tree foliage.

I then masked off the bluebells, their leaves, and all the foliage overlapping the tree trunks, both in the foreground and background areas. There was no need to mask the actual tree trunks as they were going to be of darker tones.



The next stage was to paint washes of colour over the masked foreground area - drifts of yellow greens, greens and darker shadowing blue greens - the negative spaces between the bluebells and their leaves.

The darker tones were concentrated behind the two foreground trees for cast shadows to be made by a centralised light source, which was to be an early evening sunset.

I also painted the ground area nearer the horizon line with warm pink purples, the idea being there will be a transition from blue purples in the foreground to warmer purples where they are catching the evening sun. I added some cast shadows here too.

The ground masking was then removed, all other masking kept in place.



The negative spaces between all the trees were given wet into wet texturing, using a gradient of cobalt turquoise on the horizon to Naples yellow at the top, followed by tints of yellow greens and blue greens using wet into wet stippling to convey the softer focus foliage in the distance. This was all worked sectionally.

The wash of cobalt turquoise near the horizon line helps visual recession and suggests a landscape beyond the forest.



The next stage was to paint the tree trunks taking care for the sunset glow to be rendered as highlighted edges on the tree trunks. The treatment at this stage was wet into wet, however the foreground trees will be given some more detailed texturing later on in the final stage.

I then realised I needed to have more foliage overlapping the tree trunks, so stippled these clusters in with white acrylic which could be painted over later. I also did the same treatment with the foreground bluebells as I felt they were a little too sparse.

Some of the white speckles in the mid ground were to suggest wild garlic, and here too, I added more.

It is important to remember that you can always change things



Next I painted in the foreground bluebells and leaves. This was absorbing and time consuming.

More darks in the negative areas were added, bluebells edged and the ivy behind the right foreground tree was given the same treatment.

I added some shadowing glazes, and some purple tinted whites to give the bluebell flowers a little more texture. Now it was all starting to come to life.



The next stage was to paint all the foliage. This was the most time consuming stage, needing a lot of stages, judgments and development.

The foreground tree leaves were painted in a vivid yellow green, with darker shadowing where they overlapped each other.

I needed to add even more overlapping foliage in white acrylic for the distant tree trunks as I underestimated how much the lines of the tree trunks needed breaking up. (A learning curve!).

I then painted in all the overlapping distant cluster of leaves on top the white or previously masked clusters, using yellow greens and blue greens, making the right side of the painting and some of the left more blue green to help convey the central light source. I shadow textured all this foliage. Knowing when to stop was difficult.

A rigger brush helped me paint in the thin spindly branches.

And I added even more white flowers, to bring a lightness into the overall painting, which I felt it now needed.



Some very small touches to finish, but as always, a very enjoyable stage.

I textured some details into the right and left foreground trees, and added some cast shadows from the leaves onto the bark of these two trees.

Also I strengthened the shadow sides of the foreground trees, to make them come forward to the viewer more.



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